





TWENTY SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

IN THE YEAR M.DCCC.XXI.

AT

THE LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN HULSE,

OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

TWENTY SERMONS

BY THE REV. FREDERICK

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IN THE YEAR 1862

AND

THE LECTURE

BY

THE REV. JOHN HURD

OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1821.

ON THE
EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,,

AS THEY WERE
STATED AND ENFORCED
IN THE
DISCOURSES OF OUR LORD:

—O—

COMPRISING A CONNECTED VIEW
OF THE CLAIMS WHICH JESUS ADVANCED,
OF THE
ARGUMENTS BY WHICH HE SUPPORTED THEM,
AND OF
HIS STATEMENTS RESPECTING THE
CAUSES, PROGRESS, AND CONSEQUENCES OF INFIDELITY.

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By JAMES CLARKE FRANKS, M. A.

CHAPLAIN OF TRINITY COLLEGE.

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1821

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TO THE REVEREND
CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH, D.D.

MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE,
AND LATE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY;

TO THE
VERY REV. JAMES WOOD, D.D.
MASTER OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, AND DEAN OF ELY;

AND TO THE
REV. JAMES HENRY MONK, B.D.
PROFESSOR OF GREEK,
AND FELLOW AND TUTOR OF TRINITY COLLEGE;

Surviving Trustees

OF THE
LECTURE FOUNDED BY THE REV. JOHN HULSE,

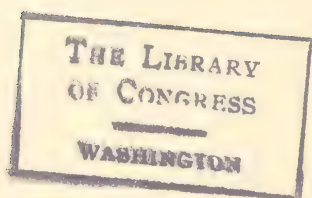
THE FOLLOWING LECTURES

PREACHED BY THEIR APPOINTMENT

ARE

GRATEFULLY AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.



“ CLAUSES from the WILL of the Rev. JOHN HULSE,
“ late of Elworth, in the county of Chester, clerk,
“ deceased, dated the twenty-first day of July, in the
“ year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and
“ seventy-seven, expressed in the words of the Tes-
“ tator, as he, in order to prevent mistakes, thought
“ proper to draw and write the same himself, and
“ directed that such clauses should every year be
“ printed, to the intent that the several persons, whom
“ it might concern and be of service to, might know
“ that there were such special donations or endow-
“ ments left for the encouragement of Piety and
“ Learning, in an age so unfortunately addicted to
“ Infidelity and Luxury, and that others might be
“ invited to the like charitable, and, as he humbly
“ hoped, seasonable and useful Benefactions.”

CLAUSE I.

“ And from and after the end, expiration, or other
determination of the said term of ninety-nine years, deter-
minable as aforesaid, I give and devise the same premises
to and to the use of the University of Cambridge for
ever, for the purposes herein after expressed, that is to
say, I will and direct that the clear rents, issues, and
profits of the same premises in Newton and Middlewich
shall be divided into six equal parts, of which four such

sixth parts shall be paid or given to the person, being a member of the said University, to be from time to time, under the directions of this my Will, adjudged to the author of the best Dissertation on the subjects hereinafter for that purpose appointed. One other such sixth part shall be given or paid every year, as an augmentation of his salary, and for his own use, to the person, being also a member of the said University, to be from time to time appointed to the Lectureship herein after founded, and who is to preach annually twenty Sermons agreeably to this my Will."

CLAUSE II.

" And I do direct and declare that the said term of one hundred years is so vested in them the said Ralph Leeke, John Smith, and Thomas Vawdrey, upon further trust, that they, or the survivors, or survivor of them, or the executors, administrators, or assigns of such survivor, do, and shall, by and out of the rents and profits of the premises in Clive, which shall arise previous to the determination of the said term of one hundred years, and no longer, annually pay the sum of sixty pounds, (exclusive of such augmentation as herein before and herein after is mentioned,) on Saint John the Evangelist's day following the preaching of the twenty Lectures or Sermons herein after mentioned, to such learned and ingenious Clergyman in the said University of Cambridge, of the degree of Master of Arts, and under the age of forty years, as shall be duly chosen or elected at the time, and by the persons herein after mentioned and appointed for that purpose, as a salary for preaching the before-mentioned Sermons or Lectures, on the days, and upon the subjects herein after more particularly mentioned and prescribed, on the determination of the said term of one hundred years."

CLAUSE III.

“ And upon further trust that they the said Ralph Leeke, John Smith, and Thomas Vawdrey, or the survivors, or survivor of them, his executors, administrators, or assigns, do, and shall pay and apply the residue of the rents, and profits of the premises in Clive, which shall arise previous to the determination of the said term of one hundred years, and no longer, and which are herein (or by a grant or rentcharge of ten pounds per annum, dated the fourth day of November, one thousand seven hundred and seventy three, by me made and enrolled in the High Court of Chancery, for certain perpetual charitable uses in the aforesaid townships of Middlewich, and Sandbach) otherwise disposed of, to and for the use of the person and persons, who shall from time to time preach the before named twenty Lectures, in augmentation of the salary herein before appointed for such Lecturer.”

CLAUSE IV.

“ And from and after the end, or other determination of the said term of one hundred years, determinable as aforesaid, I give and devise all and every my said messuages, lands, tythes, and hereditaments in Clive aforesaid, to the said University of Cambridge for ever, for the purposes herein after mentioned and contained, that is to say, I will and direct that the annual rents, tythes, and profits thereof shall be divided into six equal parts or shares, and disposed of in manner following.”

“ And first, it was always my humble and earnest desire and intention, that the following donation and devise should be founded, as much as possible, on the plan of that profoundly learned and successful inquirer into Nature, and most religious adorer of Nature's God, I mean the truly great and good (as well as honourable)

Robert Boyle, Esquire ; who has added so much lustre, and done equal service, both by his learning and his life, to his native country, and to human nature, and to the cause of Christianity and truth."

"To the promoting in some degree a design so worthy of every reasonable creature, I direct that four parts out of six of the last mentioned rents, tythes, and profits, to arise from the premises (exclusive of such augmentations as herein before and herein after are mentioned) shall be paid, on Saint John the Evangelist's Day following the preaching of the Lectures or Sermons after-mentioned, annually to such learned and ingenious clergyman in the said University, of the degree of Master of Arts, and under the age of forty years, as shall be duly chosen or elected on Christmas-day, or within seven days after, by the Vice-Chancellor there for the time being^a, and by the Master or Head of Trinity College, and the Master of Saint John's College, or by any two of them, in order to preach twenty Sermons in the whole year : that is to say, ten Sermons in the following spring, in Saint Mary's great Church in Cambridge, namely, one Sermon either on the Friday morning, or else on Sunday afternoon in every week, during the months of April, and May, and the two first weeks of June ; and likewise ten Sermons in the same Church, in the following autumn, either on the Friday morning, or else on Sunday afternoon in every week, during the months of September, and October, and during the two first weeks in November."

^a It is provided, in another clause of the Will, that if either the Master of Trinity, or the Master of St. John's be Vice-Chancellor, the Greek Professor shall be the third Trustee.—The clauses here printed are carefully specified for that purpose by Mr. Hulse, as well the preamble and conclusion of the extract, which is to be made by the Lecturer in conformity to his directions.

“The subject of which discourses shall be as followeth ; that is to say, the subject of five Sermons in the spring, and likewise of five Sermons in the autumn, shall be to shew the Evidence for Revealed Religion ; and to demonstrate, in the most convincing and persuasive manner, the truth and excellence of Christianity, so as to include not only the Prophecies and Miracles, general and particular, but also any other proper or useful arguments, whether the same be direct or collateral proofs of the Christian religion, which he may think fittest to discourse upon, either in general or particular, especially the collateral arguments, or else any particular article or branch thereof ; and chiefly against notorious Infidels, whether Atheists, or Deists, not descending to any particular sects or controversies (so much to be lamented) amongst Christians themselves ; except some new and dangerous error, either of superstition, or enthusiasm, as of Popery or Methodism, or the like, either in opinion or practice, shall prevail ; in which case only it may be necessary for that time to write and preach against the same.”

“Nevertheless, the Preacher of the ten Sermons, last mentioned, to shew the truth and excellence of revealed religion, and the evidence of Christianity, may, at his own discretion, preach either more or fewer than ten Sermons on this great argument ; only provided he shall, in consequence thereof, lessen or encrease the number of the other ten remaining Sermons, which are herein after directed to be on the more obscure parts of the Holy Scripture, in a due proportion, so as that he shall, every year, preach twenty Sermons on these subjects in the whole.”

‘And as to the ten Sermons that remain, of which five are to be preached in the spring, and five in the autumn, as before mentioned, the Lecturer or Preacher shall take for his subject some of the more difficult texts or obscure parts of the Holy Scriptures ; such, I mean,

as may appear to be more generally useful, or necessary to be explained, and which may best admit of such a comment or explanation, without seeming to pry too far into the profound secrets, or awful mysteries of the Almighty. And in all the said twenty Sermons, such practical observations shall be made, and such useful conclusions added, as may best instruct and edify mankind."

"The said twenty Sermons to be every year printed, and a new preacher to be every year elected, (except in the case of the extraordinary merit of the Preacher, when it may sometimes be thought proper to continue the same person for five or, at the most, for six years together, but for no longer term) nor shall he ever afterwards be again elected to the same duty. And I do direct, that the expence of printing the said Sermons shall be defrayed out of the said temporary stipend or salary of sixty pounds, with the augmentations first mentioned, or from the further provision hereby made, of the rents, tythes, and profits afterwards mentioned, for the said Lectures; and the remainder of the same given to him."

"And may the Divine blessing for ever go along with all my Benefactions! And may the greatest and the best of Beings, by his all-wise Providence, and gracious influence, make the same effectual to his own glory, and the good of my fellow-creatures!"



“AN ABSTRACT of the heads or material parts” of the WILL of the Rev. JOHN HULSE, relative to the *two Scholarships*, founded by him in St. John’s College, and by him directed to be added to the conclusion of the foregoing clauses, “so that such Clergyman, or persons, whom the same may concern, may know that there are such endowments, of which they may claim and take the benefit, under the regulations, and with the qualifications, therein mentioned.”

The Scholars are to be “Undergraduates of St. John’s College, who shall be born in the county Palatine of Chester.” “Such Scholar is to be elected by the Master and a majority of the senior Fellows of the said College on Christmas-day, or in the first seven days after,” and candidates are to have the preference, in the order, and with the limitations specified in the following extracts.

1.—“The son of any Clergyman, who shall at any time officiate as Curate to the Vicar of Sandbach; or next to him the son of any Vicar or Curate, who shall then live and officiate in the parish of Middlewich, as the proper Minister or Curate of Middlewich; or lastly of any Minister or Curate of the Chapel of Witton, or who shall reside and live in the town of Northwich or Witton, or the adjacent townships of Castle Northwich and Winnington, and shall do the duty of the said Chapel as the proper Minister of Witton (all of them in the said county of Chester).”

2. “And in default of such persons, then the son of any other Clergyman, who (that is which son) shall be born in either of the said parishes of Sandbach or Middlewich, or in the said Chapelry of Middlewich, shall have the preference. And if none shall be admitted, then the son of any other Clergyman shall be preferred, who (that is which son) shall be born in the said county of Chester, and next in any of the four following counties of Stafford, Salop, Derby, or Lancaster; or lastly, elsewhere in any other county or part of England, provided that it shall appear that the Clergyman who is father to such Scholar is not, if living, or, if dead, was not at the time of his death possessed of any spiritual preferment of more than one hundred and forty pounds a year, clear income; or whose income in every respect shall not exceed the clear yearly value of two hundred pounds in the whole.”

“But if no son of any Clergyman, so entitled as aforesaid, shall be elected into such Scholarship, the same shall be given to the son of some lay person, whose clear yearly income does not, if living, and, if dead, did not at the time of his death amount to more than two hundred pounds; and such son being born in the counties of Chester, Stafford, Salop, Derby, and Lancaster, the counties in that order having a preference; or lastly, elsewhere in England.”

“And such Scholar, whether the son of a Clergyman, or Layman, to be elected in manner aforesaid, shall continue to enjoy this my benefaction until he shall take, or be of standing to take his first degree of Bachelor of Arts, unless some other person, being the son of some of the officiating ministers at some of the Churches or Chapels before mentioned, and otherwise qualified as aforesaid, and which qualification, had he been a member of the said College at the time the party in possession of the Scholarship had been elected, would have been entitled to the preference, shall be admitted a member of the said College; in which case the Scholar, who shall then be in possession, shall only hold the same for that year; and the other, with a prior right, shall be elected to the same the year following. And I do appoint the Master and senior Fellows of St. John’s College Trustees for the said Scholarships.”

One third part of the moiety of Mr. Hulse’s estate in Sandbach and Bradwell is appropriated to each Scholar, *after the death of certain annuitants*. One only of the Scholarships is at present established.

POSTSCRIPT.

Perhaps it may not be amiss that the extracts from the Will should *once* be printed according to Mr. Hulse’s *first* intentions. Future Lecturers may avail themselves of the liberty given them in a clause near the conclusion of his long and intricate Will, in which he permits the Lecturer to select and abridge the more material parts of the clauses printed above; though he still requires the insertion of those relating to the Hulsean Scholarships. The former extracts were ready to be struck off when the Author discovered the clause just mentioned.

PREFACE.

THE *object* of this work is so fully explained in the second Lecture, and the series of subjects and texts, which form the table of Contents, will so clearly point out the Author's *plan*, that it will be unnecessary to detain the reader by any further remarks on those topics. He deems it, however, not inexpedient, to give some account of the origin of the present publication, both as it regards the form, in which it has been brought before the world, and the manner, in which it was first suggested to his own mind.

The following Lectures were composed and delivered by the Author, in the capacity of *Deputy* to the Hulsean Lecturer, who was prevented, by indisposition, from proceeding to the discharge of his official duties, which commenced on the first day of April in the present year.—A notice being issued by the Trustees of the Lecture, dated

March 13, 1821, inviting persons to offer their services to fulfil the provisions of Mr. Hulse's Will, after such consideration as the interval between the 13th and 26th of March allowed, though with some hesitation, the Author finally announced his willingness to undertake the task. He has now to express his gratitude to those who entrusted to him, under such circumstances, the duties of the Hulsean Lectureship, which are certainly more arduous than those of *any similar institution*; yet he has endeavoured to discharge them in the best manner he could. But he must now from the press repeat the request, which he made from the pulpit in his first Lecture, that he may obtain such indulgence, as may be thought justly due to a work of this nature, composed and printed in less than nine months. It was undertaken amidst numerous ordinary engagements, and it has been pursued amidst various unavoidable, but unexpected interruptions, with a detail of which it is not necessary to trouble the reader, but which have caused the work to appear without that careful revision of so hasty a composition,

which would have been exceedingly desirable. He could not, however, defer the *publication* of the work, and can therefore only say,

“Emendaturus, si licuisset, erat.”

The *hesitation* of the Author, with respect to the undertaking, was occasioned by the difficulty which he felt as to the method and arrangement in which so extensive a subject should be treated. Yet he was exceedingly desirous to avail himself of such an opportunity to bring it forward, since it had been so highly satisfactory to himself, and, as he thought, was likely to be generally useful.—It was first suggested to his own mind, about two years ago, by reading to a sick parishioner the fifth chapter of St. John's Gospel; a complete analysis of which is included in the following pages. The Author was at that time much astonished, and somewhat perplexed, to find that it contained a distinct enumeration and summary of the principal arguments in favour of Christianity. In his subsequent reading of the Gospels, he was even more surprised to observe that they contained, in other parts, so much on the same

subject; and he at length formed the opinion that *a complete system of evidence* might be formed in the *very words* of our Lord, and of the Sermons and Epistles of the New Testament^a. In consequence of this, when preaching before the University in December 1820, he stated his conviction that a work might be constructed upon the principle explained in the second of the following Lectures, so as to place the subject of evidence in a point of view more intelligible, and more generally edifying, than the *separate* and abstract form, which it generally assumes. But, although he had even then formed the design to bring the subject forward, when he had fully digested and arranged it, he had not the slightest conception that he should have done it within a year from that time. And when the opportunity, of which he has been able to avail himself,

^a It was not until the Author had delivered several of the Lectures, that he met with Dr. Gerard's Dissertations on subjects relating to the genius and the evidences of Christianity. He was gratified to find that so sensible a writer had taken a view of the subject so nearly resembling that here given. Many other works have also touched upon it, but none, that the Author has seen, have *completely* and *systematically* exhibited it.

occurred, it found him still more sensible than ever of the extent, as well as of the importance of the subject, in consequence of another perusal of the four Gospels with a special view to the consideration of it. He has done what he could to elucidate it, as far as they are concerned ; and all censure which this work may deserve must be directed against himself. He will contentedly submit, even to incur the charge of presumption for having ventured to undertake the following work, rather than that the *subject* should suffer in consequence of his unskilful management of it. If he has treated it with any tolerable degree of success, he thinks that it will appear that the subject of evidence is a topic of scriptural instruction, and that it may be treated, if occasion require, in our parochial ministrations, in a way which is at once explanatory of Scripture, satisfactory to the believer, and applicable to practice.

The Author has only further to request that the reader, whether, or not, he is satisfied with the statements and representations contained in this Volume, will at least borrow the *hint* which

is given in it, and study *for himself* the discourses of our Lord, and the narrative which accompanies and illustrates those discourses. Those divine records will thereby receive a fresh light and importance, and he, who so reads them, cannot fail to receive both delight and satisfaction from the heavenly and comprehensive instructions and reasonings of our Lord himself.

TRINITY COLLEGE.

Dec. 21, 1821.

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Then

Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth. p. 104



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The Infidelity of the Jews in its more *advanced* stage noticed by our Lord with allusion to a passage of Isaiah.—The occasion and purport of his Remarks; and a similar application of the same passage by the Evangelist St. John.—Other Cautions and Directions given by our Lord respecting the *Temper* and *Method* proper for Religious Inquiry.

MATT. XIII. 14—16. *And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.—For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.....* p. 475

LECTURE XX.

Our Lord's Notice of Infidelity in its *last* and *confirmed* stage.—The Blasphemy against the Son of Man, and that against the Holy Ghost.—The demand of additional Evidence, when that which is offered has been rejected.—Sanctions with which the Gospel is accompanied.—Conclusion.

LUKE XII. 8—10. *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.....* p. 500

HULSEAN LECTURES

FOR 1821.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE I.

—O—

HUMAN FRAILTY AND MORTALITY

THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF GOD'S PROMISED MERCY.

SUITABLE PROVISIONS OF THE GOSPEL,
MORE ESPECIALLY AS THEY ARE NOTICED IN THE OPENING
STATEMENTS OF THE EVANGELIST ST. JOHN.



LECTURE I.



St. JOHN I. 12—14.

As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

HE, who “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, hath made from one progenitor, and of one blood, all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth; and will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth^a.” Yet, although all men have sprung from the same original, partake of one common nature, and are indifferently the objects of their Creator’s regard, they are variously distinguished from each other. The diversities of form and countenance, station and condition, ability and pursuits, are as numerous as the individuals of

^a Acts xvii. 25, 26. 1 Tim. ii. 4.

whom the race is composed. These, however, are distinctions of time only, and of this world ; “at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment,” they will have ceased for ever. But distinctions co-exist with these, which in some respects are already manifested ; which will hereafter be more fully developed, and more completely fixed ; which time cannot efface, and death cannot destroy ; which will determine our destiny at the last decisive day, and continue with us through eternity. These important distinctions are such as respect our inner man ; our moral and religious character ; the state of our affections, and soul, and spirit, with reference to God, and his favour, and the things unseen.

To those “who believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God,” belong privileges and expectations, than which none more ennobling and animating can be enjoyed by man. They derive them from the mercy, and receive them through the power of God ; and the bliss and dignity which are hereby communicated to them in this world, are but a foretaste and pledge of more perfect blessedness in another. The same beloved Apostle who, in the words of our text, mentions these privileges, and also the wondrous method in which they were procured and revealed, in another part of his writings exclaims ; “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God." "Beloved," he adds, "now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."^a It is, however, already revealed, that "redemption through the blood of Christ has procured for us the forgiveness of sins." We know that we were thus "redeemed, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" and the adoption will one day be perfected, by "the redemption of our body" from the power of the grave. And therefore "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God; when it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into that glorious liberty" of which the children of God will partake, by being "the children of the resurrection."^b

"The hope thus set before us" is one to which we may "flee for refuge" amidst all the fears, and adversities, and uncertainties of life. And if we are convinced that "grace and truth" have indeed "come by Jesus Christ;" and that he, as "the only begotten Son of God, the Word incarnate, hath declared to us the Father;" then "though now we see him not, yet believing, we may rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

^a 1 John iii. 1, 2.

^b Eph. i. 7. Gal. iv. 5. Rom. viii. 15—23. Luke xx. 35, 36.

We purpose, in these Lectures, to call your attention to the striking and satisfactory manner in which the certainty, design, and importance of the Gospel were *originally* exhibited to mankind. We shall shew you, in our next Lecture, that the Evangelists, St. Luke and St. John, themselves have directed us to such a view of the subject. St. John has also prefaced his narrative with a comprehensive statement respecting the divine and eternal glory of the Word, who “was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth;” and the retrospective, present, and prospective, benefits of this incarnation of the Son of God. If, therefore, we devote this introductory discourse to a summary review of those important truths, into the certainty of which we are to inquire, we shall, by such a procedure, still follow the guidance of the Evangelists, and conduct our inquiries upon the plan which they suggest to us.

The Gospel announces to us an appropriate and adequate provision for our necessities, as sinful and, therefore, as dying, creatures. “For since man was a partaker of flesh and blood, the deliverer of men likewise took part of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bond-

age.”^a And rightly to have meditated upon that guilt and frailty of man, which infuses bitterness into the cup of life, and sharpens the sting of death, will best teach us that humility and gratitude, with which we ought to contemplate “the exceeding riches of God’s grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”^b

That we are frail and dying creatures is proved by universal and unvarying experience. We are carried down the stream of time ; and, like every other bubble that floats upon its surface, we also, in our turn, must disappear. Not only the fleeting portion of time during which we ourselves exist, but even the generation to which we belong, quickly passes away. The tolling bell, and the opened grave, ever and anon remind us of the unwelcome truth. Man, our brother, neighbour, and friend, “goeth to his long home ;” “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it.” And, when we remember the judgment that comes after death, conscience reminds us of our transgressions, and suggests distressing, but not groundless, fears. For, by all that we can discover of the “eternal power and Godhead” of our Creator, by all that we have been taught, or can comprehend, respecting his character, we know that he is “glorious in holi-

^a Heb. ii. 14, 15.

^b Ephes. ii. 7.

ness," and the "hater of iniquity ;" "abundant in goodness and truth," and yet of inflexible justice ; that he "searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins," and will "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." If we dwell exclusively on the contrast exhibited to us between his perfections and our imperfections, between his glory and our degradation, we could scarcely do otherwise than despair. But in order that humility may be combined with hope, we must consider these truths in connexion, as in Scripture we are taught to do. There all that is weak and frail in man is put in immediate connexion with all that is mighty and glorious in his God. Man's sinfulness and God's mercy are noticed together, both in the general declarations of his readiness to forgive, and also in the more explicit statements respecting the wondrous and consolatory provisions, which, by the incarnation and humiliation of the Son of God, are made for our redemption and salvation. Hence we may indeed learn the salutary lesson of humility and self-abhorrence ; but hence also may we be raised from the debasing depths of despair, and taught to lift up the down cast eye, to "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." We are taught "worthily to lament our sins, and to acknowledge our wretchedness," in order that the remedy provided for both may be

worthily esteemed, and earnestly sought ; that so we may obtain of “ the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”^a Yes, Christians, as “ we have none in heaven but God,” so “ if on earth we desire none in comparison of him ;” then although our “ heart and flesh” may and must “ fail, God will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.”^b Let the Psalmist, in another place, give us the assurance and the reason of such a hope : “ Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass ; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him ; and his righteousness unto children’s children ; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”^c We are taught to take the same extensive and consolatory view by St. Peter : “ We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of

^a Collect for Ash-Wednesday.

^b Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

^c Psalm ciii. 13—18.

man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away ; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”^a Here the Apostle cites and explains the words, which Isaiah ascribes to the voice crying in the wilderness ; when, rapt into Gospel times, he already seemed to hear it uttering the proclamation, “ Prepare ye the way of the Lord ; that the glory of the Lord may be revealed, and all flesh may see it together.”^b Here then we are approaching to a full discovery of the wondrous means, by which “ God’s people are comforted, their warfare is accomplished, and their iniquity pardoned.” Turn we then once more for information respecting this interesting matter to the declarations of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. What says St. Paul? “ The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh ; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not

^a 1 Pet. i. 23—25.

^b Isai. xl. 1—8. Throughout the remainder of the chapter the prophet gives a magnificent description of the divine attributes, and applies them for the consolation of man.

after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin ; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”^c We have in these words a clear and consolatory description of the blessed fulfilment of that original promise, which accompanied the sentence of death pronounced upon our first parents ; and which shewed, that, even then, “mercy rejoiced against judgment.” The deliverance then promised was that “wisdom of God in a mystery, which God ordained before the world unto our glory ;” the purposes of which were accomplished by the incarnation, and ministry, and sufferings, of the Son of God. This hidden wisdom “God revealed unto the Apostles by his Spirit, that they might know the things which are freely given us of God ; which things also they spoke, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”^d And so instructed respecting that “Lord of Glory whom the princes of this world crucified,” the Evangelist declared, in the words of our text, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the

^c Rom. viii. 2—4 ; 10, 11.

^d 1 Cor. ii. 7—13.

only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."

This passage stands in the middle of St. John's introduction to his Gospel; and it is connected, by the two first clauses, with the preceding verses of that introduction, in which he speaks of the preexistence and dignity of "the Word who was made flesh," and of his reception in the world. The latter clauses of the verse introduce the statement which he then subjoins respecting the exhibition of his glory, and the effects and purposes of his manifestation in the flesh. The Evangelist first states the original cause, and then proceeds to state the effect; which undoubtedly corresponds to the order of the divine intentions and dispensations. But our limited conceptions will best enable us, first to consider the effect, and then to ascend to its cause; first to observe the method and consequences of the Gospel revelation, and afterwards to advert to the origin and dignity of him who was thus manifested in the flesh, which afford the fullest, and indeed the only adequate, assurance that he is "mighty to save."

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth." The phraseology both of this verse, and of the preceding ones, can only be reconciled with the supposition that the Evangelist speaks not here of any abstract *quality*, or of the *doctrine* of the Gospel; but of

a *person* ; and certainly, therefore, of him who was “the author and finisher of our faith.” And whether or not he had existed previously to his appearance in the world ; and whatever were the dignity which appertained to him in such a prior state ; yet that being “made of a woman,” he partook of flesh and blood ; that he “dwelt among us” in the likeness of men, and shared in all the affections, and infirmities, and casualties of our common nature, was an obvious and undeniable fact ; upon the certainty of which every other assertion respecting him avowedly proceeds. Yet he spoke and acted as one who had authority ; he dwelt among us full of grace and truth, but in an official character. He professed to be sent of God ; yet he had not come armed with vengeance ; but as one commissioned to offer forgiveness, “to seek and to save that which was lost :” He was meek and lowly of heart, affable and benignant in demeanour. With lips full of grace he invited the weary and heavy laden to seek of him rest for their souls. By admonition and by promise he succoured the tempted. He encouraged the suppliant to perseverance in prayer. He animated the penitent with the assurance of pardon. He imparted his instructions on subjects of high and holy import with a condescension, which shewed his unlimited benevolence ; with a readiness and calm confidence, which shewed

that he spake of heavenly things as one familiar with them, and of earthly things as one who “knew what was in man.” “He spake as never man spake;” as one “in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” and to whose view “the abundance of the heart” of man was open. His words flashed conviction on the soul, for they met both the avowed objections, and the secret surmises, of the gainsayer; they were calculated to alarm the careless; they were adapted to the fears and wants and dangers of the humble inquirer. Thus did he dispel those mists of ignorance and error, which before obscured the knowledge of him, “whom truly to know is everlasting life.”

“He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and we,” says the Evangelist, “beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” He came not indeed in the artificial pomp of human glory and dignity; but in mercy and tenderness, majesty and omniscience, wisdom and power; in the bright effulgence of those perfections which we attribute to the Father, and which constitute his glory. Those who were with Jesus most, saw more, not of his infirmity, but of his glory. At his baptism, by his miracles, at his transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension “he manifested his glory” as “the only begotten of the Father.”

To the Apostles was also vouchsafed a fuller assurance and evidence of the same truth ; for they were to “ bear witness, and to shew unto the world that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto them.” “ Of his fulness,” says the Evangelist, “ have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The same grace which he exhibited in his life, was in a more especial manner exercised towards his Apostles after his ascension ; that it might be evidenced to the world by the illumination of their minds, by the importance, and suitableness, and efficacy of the doctrines they taught, and by the mighty works which they wrought through the name of Jesus, that they were sanctioned, and taught, and supported from above. His was the fulness of grace and truth ; and “ of that fulness they received grace” abundant in degree, increasing in extent, and “ instead of” that of the Old Testament, which “ though it was glorious, yet had no glory by reason of that which so far excelled it.” “ The law given by Moses” was holy and divine, but it was “ the ministration of condemnation ;” and had only “ the shadow of good things to come.” “ The grace” which it left imperfect, and “ the truth” of all that it promised and prefigured, “ came by Jesus Christ ;” who was “ the end of the law for righteousness to every

one that believeth." "To know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," is now declared to be "life eternal."

With a similar statement the Evangelist concludes his introduction. "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." By him are fully announced to us the perfect and harmonious attributes of the Father ; the relations in which we stand to him ; and the way in which he will shew mercy, and can be "just, while he justifies those that believe in Jesus." The Evangelist particularly specifies that he who hath "shewed us plainly of the Father," was "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father ;" intending, by such a statement, more deeply to impress us with a conviction of the grace, and truth, and authority, of the incarnate Word. He declares to us thereby his antecedent personal dignity, "the glory that he had with the Father before the world was ;" and that "between him and the Father was the counsel of peace," which in due time was testified by the preaching of the Gospel. The incarnation of the Son of God did indeed cause him to submit to a state of humiliation ; and it was succeeded by his "glorification as the Son of man," as "the one Mediator between God and man," as "the head over all things to his Church." But his

being “crowned with glory and honour, because of the suffering of death,” and his high exaltation to the throne of his mediatorial kingdom, did not confer upon him a new *personal* dignity, but only one of an *official* nature. It is true that as our Saviour, and as the Christ, he received “a name which is above every name; that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father^a.” But it was *because* he was “the only begotten Son of God, which is in the bosom of the Father,” that he *became* our Saviour and intercessor. In him, while he tabernacled among men, “dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” for he, of whom these things are spoken, was “God manifest in the flesh.” The whole Gospel of St. John teaches these great and essential doctrines; it opposes heresy, not by the refutation of error, but by the establishment of truth. And as, in the latter part of the introduction to his Gospel, the Evangelist notices the incarnation, glory, and success of the Son of God; so, in the former part of it, he instructs us in what *sense* we are to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He states, in the text, that it was the “Word who became flesh;” and in the preceding verses he manifestly speaks of the Word as a *person*, one also who “came from God, as

^a Phil. i. 9—11.

he afterwards went to God.” Which of us will venture to say, that he spoke not these things by the inspiration of that “Spirit, which searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God?” We might acquiesce, therefore, in this his testimony, even if the words and works of Jesus, and all the testimony of Scripture, did not teach us the same.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And having thus declared his pre-existence, his existence in the bosom of the Father even at the creation of all things, and his divinity; he adds the statement, that “the same was in the beginning with God;” lest while we do “not confound the persons,” we should “divide the substance.” And again; “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that has been made.” By him, by whose agency, as the Word of Jehovah, the heavens and the earth were made, and by whom Jehovah revealed himself to the Patriarchs, and to their chosen posterity, by the same has the world been redeemed. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” That “light ever shined in the darkness” of the heathen world, “but the darkness comprehended it not.” One “came for a witness, to bear witness of the light,” even of “the true light which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man.” He was

“a man sent from God ; His name John.” It is not said of him that “he was with God, and was God ;” for he was but a *man*, though sent of God. “He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light, that all men through him might believe.” He “went before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways ; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us^a.” Yet as he, who “was in the world, and by whom the world was made, was not known” by the Gentile world ; so also, when “he came to his own home, even his own household,” the Jews, “received him not.” For this their infidelity we can fully account ; but let us not “fall after the same example of unbelief.” We may safely confide in the truth of that record, which announces to us, “that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.” And great are the privileges, and consequent blessedness, which he is empowered to bestow. For, “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” Of the nature, and future consequences, of this adoption of Sons, which we receive through the Son of God, we

^a Luke i. 76—78.

have already spoken. And “if the Son thus make us free, we shall be free indeed ;” delivered here from the dominion of sin, and hereafter from “the bondage of corruption ;” for he who is “the first begotten from the dead, will “change the body of our humiliation, that it may be made conformal to the body of his glory ; according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself,” and to “swallow up death in victory.” We are thus begotten again unto a lively hope ; “but not of blood,” says the Evangelist ; for it is not a blessing descending by natural inheritance ; nor is it confined to any one favoured race, or family, or nation. Nor does it come “of the will of the flesh ;” for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” but this is a spiritual generation to the inheritance of spiritual blessings. Nor is it “of the will of man ;” his reason could not have discovered, his power could not have procured, his works of righteousness could not have deserved it. It is “of God ;” “who according to his own mercy hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life ^a.”

^a Titus iii. 5—7.

If, then, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," we have received through that merciful dispensation a consolation for our fears, and a remedy for our disorders; thence we learn that sin can be forgiven, and how our weakness may be strengthened. Hope succeeds to despair when we contemplate such a provision for our frailty; when we find that God has by "the Gospel of his grace," confirmed all the assurances of mercy which he had before given, supplied all that yet was lacking, confirmed all that was promised, and brought in "an everlasting righteousness." These are unspeakably important truths; but short may be the time which remains to ourselves, for securing the blessings which they make known to us. The awful hour of death is one in which we shall fully learn the value of the righteous man's hope. It is a season which will so surely come, and which may be so near, that the contemplation of it ought to quicken us in the pursuit of those blessings, which are designed to deliver us now from the fear of it, and hereafter from its power. We seek to impress upon you the certainty of death, that you may consider its consequences; that you may make the inquiries which it suggests; that you may realize the unseen verities which lie beyond the grave, and which are eternal. We proclaim to you, with reference to eternity, the doctrines of God's word, with all

their evidence, their obligations, and their consequences; you hear them for eternity. The decision to which you come respecting them is a decision for eternity. Let then our inquiries ever be pursued with a corresponding seriousness; let the illusions of time be dissipated, and the fascinations of sense lose their power over our souls, that we may learn to walk by the *faith* of things unseen, though by the sight of them we cannot; that we may have our conversation in heaven even while we remain upon earth.

We have more than once touched upon the old and trite subject of death. But often are the most important truths obvious and familiar; and therefore are they so, because they are important. It is not, however, certain that, because they are familiar to us, we have duly profited by them. Let us then, in conclusion, once more renew the recollection of our mortality; and advert to the striking remark of Solomon, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever^a."

Contrast the continued succession of the generations of men, with the permanency of the earth upon which they live. Compared with their fleeting existence, it may be said to "abide for ever." After how short a period do we find

^a Eccl. i. 4.


nearly all those, amongst whom we used to dwell, and with whom we were formerly connected, displaced and gone ; and succeeded by others who have started into existence since ourselves ! Nay, how soon are all the actors on this busy scene completely changed ; for “ there is none abiding.” Soon the place that knoweth us now, shall know us no more ; and others will occupy the estates which were ours, and the dwellings we have inhabited. Our bodies are “ houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust ;” and all that we can call *ourselves* dwells in these frail tenements. The works of man often long outlive him. What purpose do the magnificent ruins of the cities of the wilderness, and the massy piles that adorn the banks of the Nile, now serve, but to make us wonder at the skill and diligence of those long-forgotten people, of whose manners, history, and language, we have now scarcely any record ; and to cause us profitably to muse on the shortness of human life, and the instability of human grandeur ! But we need not visit these distant wonders to have a sensible proof of the same truth ; and one which may perhaps be at once more familiar and impressive. We are here surrounded by some of those edifices, which are the ornament of our country, and which excite and gratify the curiosity of the inquiring stranger. They have served the purposes of many generations that

are past; they serve ours now; and will probably continue to invite, receive, and instruct, generations yet unborn. And in this place, assuredly, we may most strikingly see how quickly one generation passeth away, and another cometh! A period of four or five years here almost changes the scene. Those, who remove from hence, do indeed for the most part go to form a portion of the permanent population of some other place. But what occasions the demand for their services in this place or in that, but the removal of some of our race by death? This perpetual change, and constant transition, are caused by the openings which death has somewhere made. The fluctuations and varying features of social life as certainly result from this cause, as motion in the natural world from a vacuum. Survey the permanent population of this or of any other place, and it will appear, that many of those, who, on setting out in life have little success and employment, in a few years become prosperous, and, with their families, are established in life. Why? Because many of their former rivals have been removed, and they have succeeded to their abodes, connexions, and emoluments. Thus is our prosperity, nay even our very means of subsistence, derived from the mortality of our predecessors and ancestors: and that of our successors and of posterity will depend equally upon

ours. Death is the debt of nature; it meets us in every time, place, and concern of life; so true is it, that "in the midst of life we are in death," and that "one generation passeth away, and another cometh."

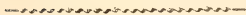
When we look round on the great congregation assembled in God's house, and recollect that, considering it *collectively*, we can assign the period within which all of us will have undergone the pangs of death; we might sit down, and, like the Persian monarch, weep at the melancholy reflection, did we not remember again, that another generation will ere that have gradually arisen, upon whom the sun will shine as brightly; for whom the earth will bring forth as plentifully; whose will be all the joys and cares, the comforts and disappointments that we have experienced; and who will share the same bounty and protection of the same God. All will be well ordered with respect to the fortunes and changes of the world in general. But will it be well with us as individuals? We know the limit *beyond* which we cannot survive, but we know not within how small a span of time we have yet to move. We know also, that whenever "the body shall return to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return to God who gave it;" to render its account before him then, and at the appointed day before the general assemblage of all generations. And let

it be remembered by us, that we cannot have any certainty that our eternal state will differ from that which would be assigned to us this day, if on this day the decision were to be made. We *may* live long ; but we may “ wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,” and may thus be treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. We *may* live long, and see many days ; but our strength *may* be brought down in the midst of our journey, and our days be shortened. And who that *now* has not his loins girt, and his lamp burning, can think that he will be ready, if his Lord comes in an unexpected hour ? How then should we even now strive, and watch, and pray, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus ! For by every thought, word, and deed, we sow that seed, of which the harvest will then be reaped ; and as we have sown to the flesh or to the spirit, we then shall reap either corruption or life everlasting.



HULSEAN LECTURES

FOR 1821.



INTRODUCTORY LECTURE II.



THE EVANGELIC RECORDS DESIGNED, ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE AND ST. JOHN, TO ASSURE US OF THE *CERTAINTY* OF THE GOSPEL, BY LAYING BEFORE US ITS *EVIDENCE*.—THEIR SUFFICIENCY FOR THAT END.—NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF THE VIEW WHICH THEY SUGGEST; AND THE PLAN OF THE FOLLOWING LECTURES IN ILLUSTRATION OF IT.

LECTURE II.

LUKE I. 1—4.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

WE, as Christians, have been instructed in momentous truths; even in all that was taught, promised, and effected, by a divine, incarnate, suffering, crucified, and exalted, Messiah. We have been baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. Having been begotten again by him to a lively hope, we have been taught the articles of our faith, the commands of our Master, the vows which are upon us, the obligations which accompany all that a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health. We have, by our own mouths, ratified the promises and vows which were made on our behalf. We have received those holy mysteries,

in the participation of which we are “fed with the spiritual food of the precious body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” We have thus become “very members incorporate of the mystical body of the Son of God ;” we thus “shew forth the Lord’s death until his coming again ;” professing that we are “heirs through hope of his everlasting kingdom ;” and praying unto our God to “grant that, by the merits and death of his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all his whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion ^a.” We have been instructed in all these great and consolatory truths ; and we have professed to believe them. If we have herein “witnessed a good confession,” and are not “losing the things which we have wrought,” then “believing with the heart unto righteousness, confession will be made by the mouth unto salvation.” Of this salvation we may entertain a good hope through the promised mercy of a gracious God. For we have also been instructed, in the midst of the fears and infirmities of our nature, and under the afflictions of this life, to “commit the keeping of our souls to God in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” We have been instructed, even in the hour of death, to “commend our Spirits into the hands of that God

^a Communion Service.

of truth who has redeemed them," "in hope of eternal life, which he, who cannot lie has promised;" and in the cheering and assured confidence, that "he, in whom we have believed, is able to keep that which we have committed to him until that day."

"So we preach, and so ye have believed." When we appear before you in this sacred place, and on this holy day, we claim not "to have dominion over your faith;" but fain would we be fellow-helpers of your joy," by endeavouring to convince you of the value and importance of "those things in which you have been instructed;" by faithfully discharging "the ministry of reconciliation;" and by "testifying, both to small and great, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." And while we discharge the ministry committed unto us, you also, by your attendance here, seem to say unto us, what Cornelius expressed in words; "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."—We have already alluded to some of those things, which are commanded us of God, and in which you have been instructed; and we purpose so to address you, that you may not be wholly at a loss how to ascertain "the *certainty* of those things in which you have been instructed." It is desirable that we should always "be put in remembrance of

these things, even though we know them, and are established in the present truth;" that we should be instructed in their several uses and applications, and be reminded of their certainty. It is desirable for ourselves, that we may not "let them slip," but "take the more earnest heed to them," and not "neglect so great a salvation." It is desirable for the continual benefit of all that have yet to learn these things, that they also may see on how solid a foundation the hope of a Christian is built.

The topic, which is to form one prominent feature in the discourses of the Hulsean Lecturer, has been so often and so largely discussed, that he cannot, perhaps, select any department of the evidences for the truth of Christianity, abundant and various as they are, in which he has not, in some measure, been anticipated. But it is because these subjects are important, rather than because they are novel, that they demand our attentive investigation. It is from the circumstance, that many will *listen* to the discussion of such topics, who might not have either opportunity or inclination to *read* much respecting them, that the utility of preaching is to be estimated, both as to this, and other, subjects of Christian instruction. The preacher may not advance any thing substantially new. But the subjects themselves, of which he treats, may have hitherto obtained only

an imperfect attention from some of those whom he addresses ; and the renewed consideration of the same extensive and interesting subjects may not be without its use with respect to others ; especially if the preacher's plan, or his method of illustration, present them in some point of view in which they have been less generally contemplated. He will probably select some line of argument, which has already afforded satisfaction to his own mind ; which he conceives calculated to elucidate the difficulties, and obviate the doubts, which may suggest themselves to the mind of the serious inquirer. And such a view will, therefore, at least have the recommendation, that it is exhibited by one, who has inquired for himself into the grounds of his belief ; who is prepared to avow his own conviction of the futility and falsehood of all the theories and objections of the infidel ; and who is at the same time ready to give to every one, who stands in the posture of a candid inquirer, " a reason of the hope that is in him." With " meekness and with fear" would we do this ; with that meek and lowly heart to which alone God will " teach his way ;" and with that " meekness towards all men," which restrains the bitter word, and the judgment of uncharitableness. We are desirous also to maintain that " fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom ;" and which alone consists with that

“good understanding,” which can enable us to judge rightly of what professes to come from him. Nor must we omit to cherish a fear respecting ourselves. Even when we seem to have attained the fullest conviction, we should still bear in mind, that “he, that thinketh he standeth, must take heed lest he fall;” and we must also “fear, lest, a promise being left us by God of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.”

In such a temper of mind let us pursue our inquiries respecting “the certainty of those things in which we have been instructed.” For the present let it suffice, to specify and explain the *method* which we propose to adopt. Perhaps it may be considered in some respects a new one; not certainly new in its principle, nor in the arguments and topics which we shall discuss; but yet perhaps new in the extent to which we shall apply that principle, and in the form and aspect which arguments, already familiar, may assume, when they are so arranged and discussed. We shall proceed, however, upon a principle, which, though not generally adopted, is as little novel as Christianity itself; which the Apostles themselves have taught us, at the same time that they also furnish the materials to which it is to be applied. We propose to consider the New Testament, not only as a directory in matters of Christian faith and practice, which,

if Christianity be from God, demands our implicit obedience ; but as being also *a repository of the several arguments in proof of the divine original of the Gospel*. We contend that Jesus and his Apostles have themselves appealed to the several evidences of the truth and divine authority of the religion which they taught ; and that, since they have so stated them, and reasoned upon them, the Christian, who *understands* the authorized records of his own religion, can be as little at a loss with respect to the reasons for his belief in the Gospel, as confessedly he ought to be, with respect to the doctrines which it requires him to receive, and the precepts which it commands him to obey.

The principle which I have now briefly stated, and which will hereafter be more fully illustrated, will indeed apply to a considerable portion of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the Epistolary writings of the New Testament. But the materials furnished by the Evangelists are so abundant, that we must content ourselves with the endeavour to embody and elucidate the arguments and reasonings advanced in the *discourses of Jesus himself*. But lest we should appear to be proceeding upon unsafe or unwarrantable grounds, we will now explain in what manner the principle may be deduced ; at what period in the Christian argument we may have recourse to it ; and the advantages which it offers to the inquirer.

I. In the important passage, which we read to you as our text, and which forms the preface to the Gospel by St. Luke, the Evangelist distinctly asserts, that certain facts had occurred in his time, of which those, who were eye-witnesses of them, had widely promulgated the knowledge by oral instruction; that others had committed that information to writing; and that he also had deemed it expedient himself to undertake a similar narrative for the benefit of Theophilus; with the design, that inasmuch as he had already been informed respecting these things by word of mouth, he might now, by means of an authentic written narrative, further be assured of the certainty of those oral instructions, and of the safety with which he might rely upon the accuracy of those accounts which he had heard^a. The matters which the Evangelist relates are a series of facts, and also a series of discourses which were delivered upon the several occasions he has specified. Upon such facts and discourses, those who had been eye and ear-witnesses grounded the whole system of Christian doctrine. And the Evangelist evidently conceived that Theophilus would both better understand those instructions, and more easily discover their truth, if furnished with that assistance, which a comprehensive and orderly

^a "Ἰνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἈΣΦΑΛΕΙΑΝ.

narrative of such matters would afford. History, of whatever kind, is chiefly valuable because of the inferences which may be drawn from the events and experience of past ages, for our own practical direction. But never did such consequences so immediately and obviously result from any facts, as the doctrines and discoveries of the Christian religion from the transactions and proceedings by which it was established. The religion itself, in all its leading peculiarities, principally consists in a statement of the design of those facts, and in the application of this knowledge as the occasion and motive of repentance, faith, and obedience. If then we can be satisfied that the *narrative* of the facts is correct, we may employ it for the purpose which the historians designed it to serve; and see whether it justifies the inferences drawn from those facts by the founder and his followers.

The Gospel of St. John contains fewer facts than the other Gospels, but a more copious record of the discourses of Jesus. He seldom, indeed, notices any fact, except for the purpose of explaining the occasion of our Lord's discourses and reasonings, and of the debates which his hearers held among themselves. And, near the conclusion of his Gospel, he tells us the design with which he wrote, and points out the inferences which he conceives to follow from what he has recorded:

“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name^a.”

If then an author has thus stated to us the object of his work; if he declares his conviction that what he has written directs us to a certain conclusion; we have only to consider the premises upon which he builds it, in order to ascertain its correctness and certainty. The materials upon which to reason are fully given; but the argument is not drawn out in form by the Evangelists themselves; for they have only narrated certain facts, and recorded certain discourses. But those discourses contain such arguments, and are connected with such facts, that if we have reason to believe that they were delivered by him to whom they are ascribed, and that the facts to which they refer, and which are related so circumstantially, are correctly related, then no considerate person can reasonably doubt that the Religion which we profess is from God; for the Gospel is found to be its own witness, defender, and apologist, in the very contents of its acknowledged records. We do not say of the Gospel history, as the Mahometan says of the Koran, that it is itself a miracle, and

^a John xx. 30, 31.

that it proves in that way its divine original; but we do say, that the Gospels supply us with materials, upon which we can reason for ourselves; and that the result of every line of argument suggested by their contents is uniformly conclusive in favour of the divinity of the Religion which they teach. Not only do the style and method, the temper and completeness, of the Gospel narratives offer to an observing reader many internal indications of the genuineness and credibility of the records; but, also, in the very contents of those records, we find assistance in examining the question with respect to the external evidence of the Religion proposed to us therein. For, as will hereafter appear, the discourses of Jesus alone bring before us so many of the leading arguments in favour of the divinity of his mission, as to be almost sufficient of themselves, if rightly understood, and duly weighed, to establish the inquirer in the belief of Christianity.

II. Probably it will be here observed, that our proposed inquiry proceeds upon the assumption, that the writings which we employ are genuine and authentic. It certainly does; and yet we do not propose to enter on that discussion. For we suppose, that both the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospel history have been so often investigated, and so fully proved, by evidence more complete and diversified than can be brought

forward in corroboration of any other history whatever, that no one, who has at all qualified himself to form an opinion, would venture to deny that the question is set at rest for ever. In fact, there is less danger that we should doubt the authenticity and credibility of these documents, than that we should neglect to use them as such ; much danger lest we should consider them less seriously, that we should embrace the consequences which follow from their truth, less resolutely, and less unreservedly, than in all sober reason we are bound to do. We might, if it were indispensably necessary for your satisfaction, immediately begin to ask you, how you could account for the establishment and propagation, nay even for the first publication, of Christianity, unless upon the supposition, that *some* such facts occurred. We might demand of you an answer to Leslie's celebrated argument, from the continual observance of the Christian ordinances ; from their avowed object, and the institution of them in the very age, and at the time, of the events which they commemorate. But we should do this with the conviction, that you would succeed no better than the acute Middleton, even though you also attempted it for twenty years^a. We

^a See Jones's Preface to Leslie's Short and Easy Method with the Deists, in the edition published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

might challenge you to shew how you can account for the reception of these writings, at the time when the verbal instructions of the declared writers were fresh in the recollection of those who heard them, nay even while they were yet alive, unless they had been their genuine productions. We might remind you of the opportunities of accurate information which these writers had enjoyed; of the improbability that the narrative which they committed to writing would differ from that, which they constantly published by word of mouth, which they began to declare immediately after the events had happened, in the very place where they occurred, in the hearing, and in defiance, of those, who were interested and disposed to contradict their statement. Such a contradiction was impossible. For when they stated, that “Jesus was a man approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of them,” the Apostles of Jesus could add, “as ye yourselves also know.” They “could not but testify the things which they had seen and heard;” and their testimony was incontrovertible, and uncontradicted, except with regard to the consequences which they deduced from the facts, and the system which they promulgated in the world, by the command, and according to the instructions, of their Master himself. There have been those, indeed, who have denied that

there is any difference between history and fable ; and who therefore contend, that we can place no reliance upon the testimony which evinces the reasonableness of our faith, and that nothing is certain but Metaphysical truth^a. That which they would substitute for Christianity is uncertain indeed ; but their very statement sufficiently betrays a conviction, that nothing, except that which subverts the credit of all history whatever, can undermine the foundation upon which we ground the authenticity of the Scriptures ; and that he who has, in whatever method, retained or regained a conviction of that nature, has already entered on the path, which, if pursued, will assuredly conduct him to a belief of the divinity of the Gospel. For, having been so far disposed to allow the credibility of the Christian story, as to be willing, with candour and attention, to peruse its records, he will perceive that "Christianity was founded on argument" both by Jesus and his Apostles. The acknowledged reality and character of certain facts, and the prior existence of certain prophecies, form the basis of their reasonings. And the more we consider these reasonings, in connexion with the occasions

^a See the citations from a French writer, in the Appendix to Bishop Van Mildert's Boyle's Lectures, Vol. II. p. 516, 517. His Lordship justly remarks, that the resolution, "*je m'abstiendrai toujours d'entrer dans la discussion des faits*," "involves an implied concession of no small importance."

upon which they were advanced, and with reference to the circumstances to which they allude, the more decided will be our conviction even of the credibility of those facts themselves; and the more readily also shall we acquiesce in the conclusion, that the nature of those facts, the whole design which is displayed in them, and the manner of its accomplishment, bespeak not merely the divine permission, but the special intention and interposition of God, that he might "give witness of his Son."

III. You will already have perceived, that we are not about to discuss such questions connected with the evidences of our religion, as might lead us to any depths of abstract reasoning. Yet we mean not to undervalue such. In their place, for the refutation of objections which proceed upon such grounds, and for the satisfaction of those, whose minds are harassed with difficulties of that nature, such abstruse inquiries have their use and value. But the belief of Christianity does not result from these only, or chiefly. There is a path which humbler minds may pursue, and which leads to the same end by a less intricate and circuitous route; nor need the wisest and most discerning be ashamed to walk therein. Take the Bible itself into your hands, and inquire how the religion of Jesus was first offered to the acceptance of mankind; upon what grounds, and

with what arguments it was then defended and enforced. And if you are unable to shew that the faith of those, who in that age embraced it, was irrational, you will feel obliged to allow the sufficiency of its evidence, and that we can have no plea for rejecting it. Examine, indeed, as accurately as you please, every objection, whether of an historical or metaphysical nature; but still remember the abundance, the strength, and the consistency of the direct arguments in its favour; and beware how you suffer objections and theories, which in fact do not interfere with that positive evidence, to weaken its impression on your mind.

I am desirous to set before you, as faithfully and distinctly as I can, the evidences of Christianity as they are presented in the discourses of our Lord, and in the accompanying narrative of the Evangelists. We are apt either wholly to neglect, or imperfectly to attend to, this view of the subject. Yet I know not any writings, in which the state of the question is so fully, strikingly, and satisfactorily exhibited. It is, perhaps, not too much to assert, that the vindication of his mission by Jesus himself is such as ought to silence, if not to reclaim, the unbeliever; but it is undoubtedly such, as affords an ever present and effectual means for confirming the faith of the believer. Almost every chapter of the Evangelic records instructs us, not only in Christian

doctrine, and duty, but in those arguments and considerations, which persuasively teach “the certainty of those things in which we have been instructed ;” and which may, in an hour of doubt and temptation, recall the conviction to our minds.

A disposition too generally exists, to consider the question of evidence, as something apart from the Bible ; as something which we ought to study before we venture to make ourselves acquainted with the Bible. But a knowledge, a full and accurate knowledge, of its contents, is necessary, that we may judge of the force and application of *any* of the arguments in favour of Christianity ; and that we may also ascertain whether there is ground for the several objections, which some have thought proper to advance. I believe that he, who has carefully read the Scriptures, particularly in the original, will find his faith very little harassed by objections and cavils ; for he will have seen that they have seldom any foundation, but in the objector’s ignorance of the Bible, or in his misinterpretation of it, or sometimes, we fear, in wilful perversion. So that the objector is generally combating the phantom of his own brain ; and those things, which the Scriptures really narrate, reveal, and require, still rest on the same evidence, and authority. We even contend, that the Scriptures actually *include* a statement of the evidences for the religion which they teach. We

refer to our Lord's discourses in corroboration of this remark. We would say to the inquirer, examine their connexion ; analyze the reasonings advanced in them ; compare all that you know of your own heart and life, and all that you have observed of human nature, with the appeals which are made by our Lord to the conscience. And we confidently believe that he, who has done this, will be previously fortified against the reasonings of the infidel ; and will have attained a conviction of the divinity, wisdom, and value, of the Gospel, of which it will not be easy to deprive him. Without such a knowledge as that we have been describing, he is not in fact qualified to judge aright. He may refuse to believe, but he has never yet had sufficient reason to disbelieve ; he may hesitate and waver, but he has never yet taken the method which can lead him to a solid and considerate decision.

We are also apt to consider the question of evidence in such a way, that the affections are not warmed, and the heart remains unmoved, even when with the understanding we assent to truths and realities so unspeakably important. We are apt to lose sight of the nature, extent, and obligations, of that into which we are inquiring ; and we lay aside the inquiry, perhaps, with as little religious emotion, as if we had satisfactorily settled some question of science, taste, or criticism. But this

is not a question of mere judgment, curiosity, or temporary interest. It inquires into the truth of a scheme, which embraces the concerns of time and eternity, and professes to provide for both ; but whose threatenings are as alarming to the ungodly, as its promises are consolatory to the faithful. The Scripture continually puts us into a practical posture, summoning the whole man to give judgment on this awfully important subject. When it has advanced what may justly convince the understanding, it then addresses the conscience ; probes and dissects the heart, and lays open all that hardens, deludes, and defiles it ; shews to us what drags down the affections, and what darkens the understanding. These moral causes of unbelief, which leave some undecided and inconsistent as Christians, and which confirm others in infidelity, are abundantly specified in Scripture. The view, which we propose to take of the evidences, is thus invested with a practical character. Not that the strict accuracy of our investigation, and the hardihood with which we ought to embrace and abide by the consequences of it, need at all be diminished by an attention to such considerations. Yet at the same time, also, that we resolve carefully to scrutinize the arguments in defence of Christianity, we are bound, both by the nature of the case, by reason, and by interest, to remember that eternal life is too

important a stake to be ventured either upon a mere cavil, or even a plausible objection; much less to be sacrificed to any of those unholy and temporizing motives, which so often give both existence and permanence to our doubts respecting religious truth.

In endeavouring to illustrate the remarks, which have now been offered, it will be impracticable to review *all* our Lord's discourses, and the facts to which they refer, in chronological order. This would, indeed, make us more completely familiar with the way in which the evidences of Christianity were at first proposed, with the effects successively produced, and with the progress of the demonstration; but it would lead to frequent repetition, as well as to a less condensed, and less comprehensive, view of the subject. It would perhaps, therefore, be expedient to consider only a few of our Lord's discourses; or even, if such there be, some single one, which brings the several heads of evidence together. Now such a summary we find in the discourse recorded in the fifth Chapter of St. John's Gospel; which contains, I believe, more orderly, distinctly, and fully, than any other, the leading arguments in behalf of our Lord's mission and character. That discourse consists of *three* distinct portions. The *first* of these contains a full and awakening statement of the

pretensions which Jesus advanced, in answer to the objections of the Jews, and in arrest of the hasty decision, and murderous intentions, which their rulers had adopted, because he had cured the impotent man on the sabbath day. The *second* division contains an appeal to five important heads of evidence in support of those pretensions. In the *third*, our Lord states the fact of the infidelity of the great body of the Jews; and notices, in a striking and forcible manner, several of the principles and errors, which were tending to, and ultimately produced, that result; and which, being for the most part common to all mankind, under the form and modifications which their respective circumstances produce, ever have been, and still are amongst ourselves, the leading causes of avowed, suppressed, and practical unbelief.

We shall bring forward what we have to offer to your consideration, in the order suggested by that discourse; not only entering upon a complete analysis of it, but also employing it as a directory for the convenient arrangement of many other detached observations, and of the facts and prophecies to which those observations refer. The first portion of our Lectures will be occupied in considering the several statements which Jesus made of his pretensions up to the period when he delivered the discourse in question.—We shall then consider the appeals which from that time

he began to make to the evidences in support of his mission and character; collecting under each of the five heads of evidence specified on that occasion, what our Lord elsewhere advanced on the same topics; and afterwards considering such as are omitted in that discourse, so as to complete that department of our subject.—And lastly, we shall conclude with considering the infidelity of the Jews; the principles and dispositions to which our Lord attributes a rejection of the Gospel; and the awful sanctions both of promise and of threatening with which it is offered to our acceptance.—But it may be expedient further to observe, that it will often be necessary to enter upon a detailed explanation of the *occasion*, upon which the several arguments were advanced; in order that we may place ourselves, as nearly as possible, in the circumstances of those to whom they were addressed. And we may also observe, that our Lord's reasonings upon evidence are *scarcely ever* separated from the statement of his pretensions, and a practical appeal to the conscience; and that the two latter topics are generally found in connexion with each other, even when unaccompanied by the first.

We have been now endeavouring to shew you, that a full acquaintance with the contents of the Gospel history is as sufficient, as it is necessary, to furnish just views of “the *certainty* of those things

in which we have been instructed." But a full acquaintance with all that Scripture teaches is requisite, in order that we may rightly understand the *nature* of "those things in which we have been instructed," and in which many of us are called to instruct others. "Let, then the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom." The more we contemplate for ourselves, and exhibit to others, the genuine doctrines of Scripture, in the manner in which Scripture itself reveals them, the better will our teaching be *understood*, and the more will it *edify*. The more shall we be "joined together in unity of spirit, by the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets;" the less will heresy or infidelity disturb, and ignorance and immorality darken, our Zion; and the more shall we "grow into a holy temple in the Lord."—Revealed religion is not a metaphysical theory. Many such have been made, and substituted for religion; but they have been as unsatisfactory, and as baseless, as any in philosophy. Thousands more might be created, as fast as the canvas receives form and colour from the painter's hand. They *may* speak the same things as "the law and the testimony;" if they do not, "it is because there is no light in them." But a knowledge of the real nature of Revelation, of its connexion, and extent, and circumstances, would banish all strange doctrines and devices of men, and would prevent the recur-

rence of the theoretical propensity; just as the Newtonian philosophy subverts our belief of the old philosophical theories, and supplies us with one of real knowledge, because grounded on certain facts. Thus the mind is disciplined to reason, and brought into a habit of calm investigation; is emancipated from the power of imagination; and is taught to prefer plain and sober, though it be yet imperfect truth, to the brightest and most complete vision that fancy ever conjured up. And as theories are not to be adopted as our Religion, so neither are they a legitimate *objection* to it; and for the same reasons. The Gospel comes with higher claims; with facts which challenge our belief; with observations the truth of which all experience has proved, and still does prove; with “the witness of God which he has given us of his Son.” Let us not then “make him a liar,” by rejecting it; let us not be “moved away from the hope of the Gospel which we have heard;” but rather let us gladly meditate on its declarations, rely upon its promises, desire its consolations, live in obedience to its precepts, and, anticipating the prospects which it holds out to us, “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

HULSEAN LECTURES

FOR 1821.



PART I.

LECTURES III—V.



STATEMENTS OF JESUS, RESPECTING HIS PRETENSIONS AND THE
OBJECT OF HIS MISSION, WHICH PRECEDED HIS ACTUAL APPEAL
TO THE EVIDENCES IN CONFIRMATION OF THEM.

LECTURE III.

OUR LORD'S CONFERENCE WITH NICODEMUS.

St. JOHN III. 1—3.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

To peruse the works of the mighty masters of reason, eloquence, and pathos, with that sensibility to their beauties, which attention and reflection alone can awaken, affords a pleasure, at once pure in its kind, diversified in its form, and salutary in its influence. Those, however, who have accurately studied the discourses of our Lord; who have made themselves familiar with his manner of instruction; who can judge of the propriety of his remarks from a knowledge of that which occasioned them; and still more those, who feel that interest in the subjects on which he treats, which

their importance is so fitted to excite ;—all such will be disposed to assent to the declaration ; “Never man spake like this man.” “His word is with power ;” for “he knew what was in man.” He appeals to the conscience in a brief, yet impressive, manner. He displays the attribute of Omniscience, “which understands long before the thoughts” of the heart ; manifests an acquaintance with the intentions of his hearers ; and answers the doubt, objection, and cavil, when “scarce struggling into birth,” or, at least, not yet clothed in words. The questions upon which he decides, without hesitation, embarrassment, or ambiguity, are such as calm the fears, remove the doubts, and answer the inquiries, which have in all ages exercised the sagacity of our fellow men. He opens to us the door of hope, points out the objects of faith, and describes the pathway of obedience. He speaks as befits one who “has the words of eternal life ;” with that solemnity, which challenges our attention ; with that authority, which evidences not the presumptuous confidence of the conceited sciolist, but the deep and abiding conviction of him, who “speaks of what he has known, and who testifies what he had seen.” And as he declares to us the awful alternative of either believing in him, or of dying in our sins ; so he also directs our attention to those several facts, considerations, and inquiries, by which we

may be assured that he “came forth from God;” and that “no one cometh to the Father, but by him, as the appointed way, the truth, and the life.”

We proposed to consider our Lord’s discourses with more especial reference to the last mentioned topic; having previously noticed such as inform us respecting the claims which he advanced.—Now the *earliest* statements of our Lord respecting his mission and character and office, are both important in themselves, and also furnish a key for the right understanding of his subsequent discourses. To several of these, therefore, we shall direct your attention; all of them such as were delivered previously to any of those reasonings respecting the *evidences* of his mission, upon which he entered at a more advanced period of his ministry. Such is the conference with Nicodemus; and that with the Samaritan woman, and some of her countrymen. Such also is the account given by the first three Evangelists of the general tenor of our Lord’s teaching in Galilee; and, more especially, the account given by St. Luke of his discourse in the synagogue of Nazareth. Such also is the opening portion of the discourse recorded in St. John’s fifth chapter, which may, in some measure, be considered a continuation of the discourse with Nicodemus. A cursory review of these several discourses of our Lord, will form the first general division of

our Lectures ; and will introduce us to the consideration of the second portion of the last mentioned discourse, which contains our Lord's first appeal to the evidences in confirmation of his claims.

The remainder of our time on this day will be occupied by the consideration of our Lord's conference with Nicodemus, which took place at an early period of his ministry. And it will be expedient, in order to the better illustration of our Lord's remarks on that occasion, first to take some notice of the circumstances recorded by St. John in his two first chapters, and of the particular observations with which he introduces his narrative of this conference.

Very shortly after his first miracle at Cana in Galilee, Jesus went up to the passover at Jerusalem. He then, for the first time, shewed his zeal against the profanation of his Father's house, by the removal of the traders, and their merchandize, from the outer court of the temple. For the full proof of his "authority to do these things," he referred to the future sign of his resurrection from the dead : declaring, figuratively indeed, but in a manner which the event proved to be distinctly and accurately prophetic, that when they should "destroy the temple of his body, he would raise it up in three days." Even his disciples, who had already believed on him,

did not understand this “till after he was risen from the dead.” But in consequence of the testimony of John the Baptist, of the more than human knowledge displayed by Jesus, and of the manifestation of his glory by the miracle at Cana, they had already received sensible, intelligible, and sufficient evidence, to justify a belief in his prophetic character; even though they did not at first understand the purport of all that he said, and the reason of all that he did. And, at this passover, Jesus exhibited, and, as it should seem, very publicly, similar proofs of his divine commission. Although we are not told the particulars respecting them, we are fully apprized of their effects upon those who were present. “When he was in Jerusalem, at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed on his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.” And afterwards, “when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast^a.” But Jesus, “knowing all men, and not needing that any should testify of man, because he knew what was in man^b,” was well aware beforehand, as the event has fully shewn to us, that much fuller evidence would be necessary so to convince them of his heavenly mission, as to dispose them finally

^a John ii. 23. iv. 45.

^b John ii. 24, 25.

to receive him in all his offices, and not to be offended in him, because of what he came to do, and to teach. To such he “did not commit,” or trust, “himself,” by a premature declaration of his office and purposes. But this general rule was not without exception ; as the case of Nicodemus, and of the Samaritans, will shew. To them he made a more explicit declaration of himself than for some time he did to others, even than he made to the twelve disciples. And the reason of this certainly was, that the rule, which prudence, guided by a divine knowledge, led him generally to adopt, did not apply to them. He acted, in each of these cases, according to his accurate knowledge of what was proper and expedient. This observation, premised in fact by the Evangelist himself before he relates these incidents, should be attentively borne in mind in the consideration of both of them ; and we trust that the distinction between these two cases, compared with each other, and also with the general conduct of our Lord during his ministry, will appear from what we offer in this, and a subsequent, discourse. This observation of the Evangelist, is indeed one of great importance ; for it explains the principle upon which Jesus acted *throughout* his ministry. And as an important rule for the interpretation of the Gospels is suggested by it, we must not lose sight of it while we endeavour to ascertain,

from some of our Lord's earliest discourses, the several views in which he places his character, and office.

We are informed, by the Evangelist, immediately afterwards, that "there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night," and made the following profession of his own belief, and probably that of some others; together with the reasons upon which it was founded. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." This was a declaration, which implied his full conviction of the reality of those miracles; and which shews that he drew from them that inference, in the propriety of which the records of the Old Testament would abundantly instruct him; which must ever be drawn by every unprejudiced inquirer from an evident and well-attested miracle; and which, indeed, cannot consistently be set aside, except by subverting all reliance on human senses and human testimony, or by proving that there is no God to reveal his will to man. It was not upon such grounds that the rulers and people of the Jews ever hesitated to admit the authority of Jesus; but because their prejudices, and fondly cherished expectations, were painfully counteracted and disappointed. The miracles, and some parts of our

Lord's teaching, frequently operated to produce a conviction in his favour, and that apparently deep, decided, and vehement in its character. But the current was always arrested in its course, and ultimately seemed to be wholly diverted in another direction, by his faithful and precise annunciation at such times of the mysterious and unwelcome truths, which must be received by all that would be his disciples. "Some even of the rulers believed on him;" but the temporal penalties which the power and unbelief of their brethren would draw down upon them, deterred them even from advancing so far as Nicodemus. In *him* our Lord had a candid judge, and a willing disciple; one impeded, as much as his fellow countrymen, by the peculiar prejudices of a Jew and a Pharisee; but who, amidst all the doubts and difficulties which perplexed his mind, and amidst all the weakness and fear which, in some measure, kept him back from an open acknowledgement of his faith, still retained that hardihood of a candid and reasonable mind, which resolves, and which sooner or later acts upon the resolution, to abide by truth, however unwelcome, which is evidenced to be such by undeniable and sufficient proofs. He comes to our Lord with a conviction, and in a temper, which he seems to have ever retained. He comes with all his prejudices strong, and with his mind imperfectly

apprehending the office of him, whom he respected as “a teacher come from God.” But believing him to be such, he is willing to learn from him “the way of God more perfectly.” Jesus, therefore, knowing both his imperfect knowledge, and his desire of instruction; and that he would never employ it to further the hasty and malignant opposition of his brother Pharisees, gives to such a one an early, and comprehensive, though at that period to him a difficult, statement respecting “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” But Nicodemus adopted, in all its bearings, the principle which he afterwards recommended to the Jewish council, and which it becomes us also to adopt, as claiming the assent of every impartial judge in this matter. “Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth^a?” *He* observed the works and conduct of Jesus, and attentively considered his instructions. By proceeding in the same way, *we* can judge upon grounds as reasonable as he did; and shall doubtless, come to the same conclusion respecting “Jesus, who is called Christ.”

The instructions, which our Lord gave in answer to the profession of Nicodemus, connect themselves immediately with the previous decla-

^a See John vii. 51.

rations of the Baptist respecting the near approach of the kingdom of heaven, the baptism with water unto repentance, and the predicted baptism of the Spirit. And we may be well assured, that one who was a member of that council, which sent an official deputation to John to inquire who he was, and why he baptized, was well aware of the tenor and purport of the Baptist's instructions. We cannot, indeed, at all doubt it, when we consider the publicity of his labours, and the inquiring temper of Nicodemus. And we may, with great probability, suppose, that the authoritative act of Jesus in the temple, connected with his miracles, disposed this ruler to suppose, that he was the mightier one of whom John spoke; and either that he was the Christ, or that Prophet whom they expected. If he had also been informed that John had borne witness personally to Jesus, he might have already come to the conclusion, which others afterwards expressed; "John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true^a." In some such frame of mind, however, he came to Jesus, and Jesus meets his implied desire of instruction from a divine teacher, by unfolding to him more fully and definitely than John had taught it:

^a John x. 41.

1. The necessity of baptismal and spiritual regeneration, in order to *see* and *enter* into the kingdom of God ; either to understand its nature and provisions, or to enter upon the possession of its privileges.
2. The certainty of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as taught by the Son of man, who came down from heaven.
3. The great and crowning event, which would lead to the setting up of that kingdom, with a statement of its origin and design ; and the necessity of faith in the Son of God in order to partake of the blessings thereby procured.
4. The condemnation of those, who disbelieve, and its justice evinced by the motives which give rise to such a rejection.

I. The answer which Jesus gives to the declaration with which Nicodemus accosted him, appears, at first sight, abrupt ; and it is, in fact, an answer to something implied, rather than expressed, in the words of Nicodemus. But if we bear in mind the observation which the Evangelist has premised, that Jesus “needed not that any should testify of man, because he knew what was in man ;” and if we remember also, that Nicodemus declared his confidence in Jesus as a divine teacher, at a time when the Jews were expecting the establishment of the kingdom of God, and after the approach of that kingdom had already

been announced by the Baptist; it seems probable that he supposed that the mission of Jesus, sanctioned by miracles, and superior, therefore, to that of the Baptist, had reference to the kingdom which John had proclaimed. And such indeed was the subject, in which Jesus was prepared to instruct those, who allowed him to be "a teacher come from God." He therefore immediately entered upon it with Nicodemus; thereby confirming his suspicions, and meeting his wishes; although he began by a statement which was designed to rectify his erroneous conceptions. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

A *Gentile*, when converted to Judaism, abandoned his former principles, and began, as it were, a new life; and they themselves inculcated upon him such a thorough revolution of sentiment, and acknowledged the necessity of it. But a change of the same nature was also requisite for the *Jew*, as the very door and entrance into the kingdom of God. The many incorrect notions, which they had adopted, would be an insuperable obstacle, until they were abandoned, and replaced by others of a wholly different aspect. This Jesus announced in general terms at first; and in words which appear to refer only to obstacles of such a nature as we have just

mentioned, whether, in fact, they be Jewish or Gentile prejudices. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The verb ($\gammaεννηθῆναι$) being in the past tense, both in this verse, and in a subsequent one, it would, perhaps, be more accurately rendered, "Unless any one has been born (or rather *begotten*) anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He does not yet speak of *water* and the *Spirit*; nor does he yet use the expression, "*enter* into the kingdom of God." There seems reason to believe, that this difference of expression is not merely casual; and that in this proposition he does not advance so far as in the subsequent one; but that he speaks only of the disposition to which we have already alluded, viz., a readiness to abandon all those preconceived opinions, which, as long as we resolutely abide by them, oppose the admission of revealed truth; and to embrace those which bear the impress of divine authority, though they may have been unexpected, and are at variance both with our prejudices, and inclinations. This, in fact, seems to parallel another of our Lord's declarations, in which he speaks of the necessity of being "taught of God^a;" and also that of St. Paul, in which he declares, that "no man, speaking by the Spirit

^a John vi. 45.

of God, calleth Jesus accursed ; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost ^a.” The same Apostle also laments that the Jews, “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God ; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth ^b.” “Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ;” but he, who had been begotten anew to more correct views of the kingdom of God, would see that “Christ was the power of God, and the wisdom of God ;” and thus seeing and believing, would desire to be “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, that he might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ^c.”

This further step in the way of salvation by the Gospel, our Lord proceeded to explain to Nicodemus, who misunderstood the former statement, by supposing it to speak of a literal birth. “Jesus answered and said, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” The full import of these words Nicodemus certainly could not comprehend ; but their general tenor he might have

^a 1 Cor. xii. 3.

^b Rom. x. 3, 4.

^c 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. Acts ii. 38.

apprehended, from the passages, in which Moses speaks of the *circumcision of the heart*, and in which David prays for the *renewal of a right spirit*, and his *establishment by the free Spirit of God*, in order that, “having been shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, he might be made to know wisdom^d.” The same also might he learn from many passages, in which the prophets connect the promise of the Spirit with an allusion to the *pouring out and sprinkling with water*, in order that God might “write his laws upon their hearts in the latter days^e.” And more especially, might he have learnt the meaning of these things, if not, as “the Teacher of Israel,” yet as the disciple of the Baptist, who had accompanied the preaching of the kingdom with the administration of baptism; at the same time exhorting to a repentance issuing in reformation, and predicting the baptism of the Spirit. We, at least, comparing the baptismal doctrine of John with these words of our Lord, with the remainder of his teaching, with his last commission to the Apostles, and with their practice and declarations in consequence of it, can surely be at no loss to understand the meaning of our Lord. And we

^d Deut. x. 16; xxx. 6. Psalm li. 5—13.

^e Isai. xlv. 3—5; lv. 1. Jer. xxxi. 31—34. Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. See also Numb. xix. 20.

shall not surely doubt, that, although “to be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, to be received into Christ’s holy Church, and to be made lively members of the same,” is assuredly “that thing, which by nature we cannot have ;” yet that “a means by which we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof,” is instituted in Christ’s Church^a. We, as Christians, have already been instructed to believe, that, “after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God hath saved us, by the *washing of regeneration*, and the *renewing of the Holy Ghost* ; which he hath shed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life^b.” This is certainly the instituted, covenanted, and ordinary way, in which we are brought to “*enter into the kingdom of God* ;” by which we are enabled to walk therein as the sons of God, and to grow in grace and holiness, till we are made meet, by means of God’s word, and the various ordinances of his house, to be “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The end for which these doctrines are revealed,

^a Baptismal Service, and Catechism.

^b Titus iii. 4—7.

and these assistances provided, is undoubtedly this, “that we may be sanctified wholly ; and that our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ^c.” Our Lord obviously refers to this subject, when he says to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” And it must occur to every one who is acquainted with the language of the New Testament, that a like phraseology is employed in many other passages ; perhaps in almost all that treat of the nature, and operation, of human depravity ; and of that “renovation in the spirit of our mind,” by which we are “created anew in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after the image of him that first created us^d.” By our natural birth, we also, as well as Adam, are made “living souls ;” but by our descent from him, we also partake of that “fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam ; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the

^c 1 Thess. v. 23.

^d See more particularly from Rom. vii. 14. to the 17th verse of the following chapter. 1 Cor. ii. 9—16. and iii. 1—4. xv. 42—54. Gal. v. 13. to the end, and vi. 1—8.

Spirit^a.” The *spirit* of man, the intellectual and more exalted part of his nature, is, in consequence of the fall, so impaired and disordered, as to have lost its ascendancy over the *body* and *soul*, the inferior and merely animal part of his frame; which in another passage is called the *flesh*, with its *affections and lusts*^b.” “In our flesh dwelleth no good thing;” for “we see a law in our members warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members;” so that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” “But,” adds the Apostle, “ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you^c.” For, as our Lord observes, “that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” And we must derive this spiritual life from “the second Adam, who was made a quickening spirit^d,” for he “baptizeth with the Holy Ghost^e,” and has instituted the external and visible sign of water in baptism, as a symbol of the inward and spiritual grace of regeneration by the

^a Article IX. On Original or Birth Sin.—A reference to the remainder of that Article will further shew, how closely our Reformers adhered to the *scriptural* representation of the constitution of our nature, and of the disorder which the fall has occasioned.

^b Gal. v. 24.

^c Rom. vii. 18, 23; viii. 8, 9.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 45.

^e John i. 33.

Holy Ghost ; to be “a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.”

He who has observed, and duly considered, this Scriptural view of the constitution of man, as consisting of “body, soul, and spirit^f,” will find that many passages have appeared obscure, principally in consequence of inattention to the uniformity and consistency which characterises the language of Scripture on this subject. He will see how the word of God “pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit^g,” in its accurate descriptions of the state of human nature ; and how wondrously the blessings which it announces are adapted to the spiritual necessities of man. A summary of the design of the Gospel, as “the ministration of the Spirit^h,” and of its necessity in order to the regeneration and salvation of mankind, is given by our Lord to Nicodemus ; the whole of which we will now cite, in the hope that the preceding remarks may have tended to elucidate them. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh ; and that

^f The original words are *σῶμα*, *ψυχὴ*, and *πνεῦμα* ; and *σὰρξ* is frequently used, and contrasted with *πνεῦμα*, as including the two first.

^g Heb. iv. 12.

^h 2 Cor. iii. 8.

which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

By the comparison employed in the conclusion of these words, our Lord teaches us, that although he, "who is born of the Spirit," cannot discover the cause, or comprehend the mode, of the operations of the Spirit, this does not disprove their necessity, or their reality; for he can perceive their effects. To adopt the language of an Apostle on this subject, such an one knows that the "natural man (*ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος*) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned^a." He knows that there is a "spirit in man; and that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding^b;" so that "he that is spiritual judgeth all things." He knows that "if he lives after the flesh, he shall die; but if through the spirit, he mortifies the deeds of the body, he shall live;"—that "if he have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and if Christ be in him, the body is dead, because of sin, but the spirit is life, because of righteousness^c;" that "they that are Christ's, have crucified

^a 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

^b Job xxxii. 8.

^c Rom. viii. 13, 9, 10.

the flesh, with the affections and lusts ;”—that “if he walks in the spirit, he shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh^d ;”—that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God ;”—that “the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God ; and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ^e.”

Thus comprehensive and important is this first and most difficult portion of the discourse of our Lord to Nicodemus. We shall now do little more than refer to the remaining parts of it ; especially as some of the views, which they contain, will hereafter come under our notice, particularly in the discourse delivered after the cure of the impotent man ; which is a continuation and enlargement of some of the statements made to Nicodemus.

II. Surprised and perplexed by what he had just heard, Nicodemus asked, “How can these things be ? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ?

^d Gal. v. 24, 16.

^e Rom. viii. 14—17.

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven." As if he had said, "I have spoken of things, respecting which the oracles of God, committed to you, are by no means silent. I have described them in phraseology which you yourselves have also employed upon a similar subject. I declare them from my own knowledge and observation. And yet you do not seem disposed to receive my witness respecting them, though you have had evidence that I am a divine teacher; and though that evidence has induced you to think me such. Yet I am sent to reveal truths still more sublime. But if ye believe not what I tell you respecting "earthly things," which relate personally to yourselves, which are attested by your own experience, and which can be illustrated by allusion to terrestrial and familiar objects; "how will ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things," which are so remote from your apprehensions; which none ever yet knew, which none could ever communicate, but the Son of man. For no other man hath ascended into heaven, but he came down from heaven; for heaven is his native and peculiar abode.

III. Having thus adopted, for the first time, the title of the Son of man, in a manner which clearly implied that he applied it to himself, and the prophetic usage of which Nicodemus would

probably recollect^a, Jesus proceeded further to instruct Nicodemus respecting the method in which the Son of man would accomplish his mission, and alluded, prophetically, to the closing scene of his life. He compared with it the last miracle of the life of Moses, which bore a typical resemblance to it; thereby again stating respecting the kingdom of the Son of man, what would by no means be conformable to the expectations of a Jew. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Asserting, once and again, the necessity of faith in the Son of man, in order to a reception of the benefits of his mission, Jesus yet more distinctly announced to his disciple the universal extent of the intended mercy, the spiritual nature of the blessings which it conferred, the pure source from whence they flowed, and the divine original of the Son of man, who was sent to reveal, and to communicate them. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.”

^a Dan. vii. 13, 14.

The truths conveyed in these words are, indeed, familiar to our ears, and memories, and understandings. They are truths in which we have been again and again instructed. We have need, however, to see to it, that, while we do in words, and even in our judgment, acknowledge their certainty, we do not “frustrate the grace of God, and receive it in vain.” We have need frequently to call to mind, that as the comforts and prospects which they offer to us, are great and eternal, so the end of them “that obey not the truth in the love of it,” and who are not through it “transformed by the renewing of their minds,” is a fearful and a hopeless one. I know not what words can more forcibly represent these things to us, more fully represent to us the justice of our condemnation, and more powerfully call upon us to inquire into the real cause of our unbelief, negligence, and disobedience, than the concluding words of our Lord’s discourse.

IV. “He that believeth on him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that

doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” Men would fain attribute their unbelief to other causes rather than this. And there are, undoubtedly, “sinful desires of the mind,” as well as “of the flesh.” There is a perversity of understanding, which can offer plausible apologies for error, both doctrinal, and practical. But we fear that the cause specified in the text is of more general influence than meets the ken of mortal eye. Even when we endeavour to analyze our own principles, we may overlook the love of sin as a primary, though concealed, cause, whether of infidelity, or of perversion of the truth. We must, then, earnestly “examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.” We must see “that the light that is in us be not darkness; for if it be, how great is that darkness!” how impenetrable! how dismal! and how fatal! And the great danger of such a situation is, not only that we *are* in darkness, when we walk in the paths of sin, but that we “*love* darkness rather than light!” For “light is that which makes manifest,” and the lamp of God’s word shews us the appalling view of our guilt, and condemnation, and danger. We cannot bear such a light, and we therefore hate it. We will not come to it, lest our deeds should be reprov’d. We become, at length, so habituated to our state, and so reluctant to change it, that as soon might we

suppose that one who has been brought up in the depths of a mine, or been immured for years in the darksome dungeon, can bear to emerge at once into the light of the midday sun, as that the man, whose principles and conduct are inconsistent with the dictates of religion, will readily subject them to the test of that word of God, which is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Yet the works of darkness are “unfruitful works;” and “the end of them is death;” but, on the contrary, “reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” Let us then resolve, to “walk in the light of the Lord;” and to “prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Let us not defer this resolution; lest our heart become more “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;” and we at the same time become so familiar with those truths, which ought to undeceive, reform, and sanctify us, as to disqualify *them* from giving, and *ourselves* from receiving, the necessary instruction and conviction. But if we receive the word in an honest and good heart, and press on towards perfection, we shall derive abundantly more satisfaction in the conviction, “that our deeds are wrought in God,” than ever the ways of sin could afford. And our security will be as great as our happiness. But those on the contrary, who hate the light of truth, destitute alike of knowledge to direct the steps, and of comfort to rejoice the heart, will walk

on still in darkness ; until “ their feet stumble upon the dark mountains ; and while they look for light, the Lord their God turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness^a. ”

^a Jer. xiii. 16.



LECTURE IV.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING IN SAMARIA AND GALILEE.
—AT WHAT PERIOD, AND FOR WHAT REASON, HE
BEGAN TO ARGUE IN DEFENCE OF HIS MISSION.

MATTHEW IV. 23.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.

WE know that "Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good;" that he imparted health to the diseased, consolation to the distressed, and instruction to the ignorant. As in reading the history of the benevolent Howard, so also in perusing that of Jesus, our admiration is mingled with a feeling of thankful satisfaction that such an one has appeared among mortals, gifted with the disposition and the ability to alleviate "the miseries of this sinful world."—But it is not merely as a Philanthropist that we must contemplate the character of Jesus. For at the moment that we are sympathizing in the joy of those who are rejoicing because he has dried up their tears, we find a claim presented to ourselves for somewhat more than admiration. We find that he has

somewhat to declare to *us*, as well as to the immediate objects of his more than human beneficence. He has excited indeed a deep interest in our minds ; but we perceive that his design is not accomplished, unless he can prevail upon us to recognize in himself the features of a messenger of God, and, with unabated interest, and also with implicit obedience, to listen to his heavenly doctrine. And if, after such a discovery, we manifest a disposition to stifle the feelings of admiration, to withdraw our confidence, and to retire from his presence, he suffers us not to depart, till he has changed his tone of invitation into that of solemn, but affectionate, warning, as to the ingratitude, inconsistency, and danger, of disregarding his instructions. We find that we must still follow him, not only for the gratification of our benevolent feelings ; not only because we can “ eat of the loaves and be filled ;” nay, not only because we can “ see some miracle done by him,” and learn thereby that “ God is with him ;” but that we may “ labour for, and be nourished by, the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which he, as the Son of man, shall give unto us ; for him hath God the Father sealed.” And if we ask, “ What shall we do, that we may work the works of God ?” we hear him declaring, “ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” We naturally inquire *in what cha-*

racter he is sent ; and *what evidence* we have to assure us that he is, for purposes so important, “sealed, sanctified, and sent into the world.”—Upon this principle we proposed to conduct our inquiries ; and taking occasion from the brief statement given in our text, let us now so far consider the detail of his earlier ministrations, subsequently to the discourse with Nicodemus, as to learn from his own lips what he says of himself, and also “what signs he shews that we may see and believe him.”

Subsequently to the solemnities of the Passover at Jerusalem, and to the conference with Nicodemus, Jesus went from the city into Judea ; and, because John had then retired into Galilee, tarried there for the space of probably six or seven months, and baptized. But knowing that the Pharisees were aware, that he had made and baptized even more disciples than John ; and probably apprehending that the Pharisees, being jealous of his success, might follow the example of Herod, who had imprisoned John in Galilee ; he left Judea, and journeyed towards Galilee, that he might labour in the footsteps of his forerunner. “And he must needs go through Samaria.”—Thither let us accompany him, and behold him, wearied with his journey, sitting at the well of Jacob, near the city Sychar. For there shall we hear his heavenly doctrine, and an explicit avowal

of the character in which he delivered it, at the well-known and interesting interview with a Samaritan woman^a.

As Jesus sat by the well, the woman came to draw water; and Jesus asked for a draught of the water. The request was received with an expression of wonder which almost implied a refusal; because the mutual enmity of the Jews and Samaritans had long prevented all intercourse of a friendly nature. But our Lord, who came to remove the enmity between Jew and Gentile, and to reconcile them to each other, so as to bring them into one body by his cross, checked rather than encouraged her indulgence of this national animosity; and, borrowing, as his custom was, an illustration from the objects immediately before him, in a gradual and familiar manner he led her to the consideration and apprehension of the great truths in which he designed to instruct her.

“If, says he, thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Her attention and curiosity were excited by the latter expression, which seemed to allude to present and sensible things; but the first clause which pointed out the

^a John iv. 5—42.

divine origin and source of that, concerning which he spoke, seems not to have made so strong an impression. She answers *first* to the last clause of our Lord's remark, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, from whence then hast thou that living water?" Being also unable to understand the meaning of Jesus in the preceding clause, in which he seemed to her to state that he was a greater one than she supposed, she added; "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" Our Lord did not stay to refute her probably unauthorized claim to be a descendant of Jacob, but proceeded to the more important endeavour to lead her thoughts to that gift of God, of which she yet knew so little, but of which it was his desire to apprise her. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." She evidently did not yet perceive the drift of our Lord's remark; and therefore with a mingled feeling of embarrassment, astonishment, and incredulity, she added, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."—Jesus next proceeded to deal with her in a different manner; but we stay, for a moment,

to inquire what was the living water of which he spake.

We know that the prophets described, under this significant image, the future spiritual blessings of the Gospel; and that one passage specifies the particular blessings which were thereby intended. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour out *my spirit* upon thy seed, and *my blessing* upon thine offspring^a." Our Lord afterwards used the same figure on the last and great day of the feast of tabernacles, when they drew from the pool of Siloam, and solemnly offered and poured out water; thus, by an observance apparently sanctioned only by tradition, commemorating the miraculous supply of water in the wilderness from the smitten rock. An Apostle has said, that "they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ^b." Accordingly Jesus here speaks of himself as having the power to bestow this gift of God; and in the last day of the feast of tabernacles, resuming the subject, he cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The Evangelist

^a Isai. xliv. 3—5. lv. 1. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Hosea xiv. 5.

^b 1 Cor. x. 1—4.

adds a comment upon this beautiful and persuasive declaration. "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive ; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." He adds, that " many of the people, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet ; others said, This is the Christ^a." *They* knew the writings of the prophets, and hence they drew their inference. But the Samaritans probably received only the five books of Moses ; and yet our Lord proceeded to shew the Samaritan woman, in a manner suited to her circumstances, both that he was " a prophet," and also that he was " the Christ." And we may here remark, that only on the day of that interview, and the two which immediately followed it, did he labour among the Samaritans. Yet they believed in him. And when the Apostles, in obedience to our Lord's order, became " witnesses to him in Samaria," and preached him among them as the Christ, they then also " gave heed with one accord to the things preached to them" by Philip the deacon. And " when the Apostles heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John," who communicated to them the gifts of that Holy Spirit, of which Jesus had so long before spoken amongst them^b.

^a John vii. 37—43.

^b Acts viii. 5—17.

But to proceed with our more immediate subject. Jesus desired the woman “to call her husband,” and come to him again. Her simple declaration that “she had no husband,” with the suppression of the disgraceful circumstances which made her declaration true, gave occasion to Jesus, to shew her, that he was fully aware of those very circumstances, of the whole course of her past life, and of her impure and illicit connection at that time. Astonished and confounded, like Nathanael, to whom our Lord displayed a knowledge of his more commendable private history, she confessed her conviction, at length, that she had not hitherto appreciated his character. “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” But not immediately availing herself of this opportunity to ask the full import of what that prophet had just declared to her, she proposed for his decision the controverted question, so long debated between themselves and the Jews, whether Gerizim or Jerusalem was “the place in which men ought to worship.” Our Lord decided this in favour of the Jews; instructed her further in the true *nature* of worship, as always more important than the *place* where it was performed; and assured her that shortly the very ground and occasion of their debate would be removed, by the introduction of a spiritual and more extensive dispensation. “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when

ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In this intimation of the near approach of a season, respecting which it had been predicted that "in every place incense, and a pure offering should be offered unto the name of the Lord of hosts^a," the woman appears to have acquiesced; for Jesus therein spoke as a prophet, and she had been convinced that he could justly claim that character. But Jesus had yet to announce to her that he was "more than a prophet;" that his was that title and character, which authorized him, by her own confession, to claim her ready and unreserved assent to his decision of the question. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah is coming; when he is come, he will tell us all things.—Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

We have here a declaration, which, in one word, communicates to us a knowledge of the office and character, to which Jesus laid claim;

^a Mal. i. 11.

but which he had never before stated in those precise terms, nor afterwards did, until his last arraignment before the High Priest. On that occasion he replied in the affirmative to the solemn "adjuration by the most High God, that he should tell them whether he were the Christ, or not." If we ask the reason of his openness on this occasion, and of his reserve upon others, we answer, that at this time only, during his personal ministry, did he instruct the Samaritans, at all other times, he laboured amongst Jews. In Samaria "the fields were already white unto the harvest;" and accordingly, when "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace" was preached unto them by the companions of the Apostles, then also they "gladly received the word." Yet as our Lord never visited them again as a teacher, and also directed the twelve not to enter into any city of the Samaritans; so neither does it appear that John had preached among them as our Lord's forerunner. He laboured among the Jews only; because among *them* it was necessary that "every valley should be filled, every mountain and hill be made low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain; before all flesh could see the salvation of God." They had so joined the notion of Messiah's office as a prophet and a priest, with his kingly prerogative, as to make the latter supersede, or at least neutralize, the former.

They were therefore dealt with in a manner, which these partial and carnal prejudices rendered necessary ; in order that, whether or not they ultimately recognized the real office of the Messiah, and received Jesus as that Messiah, they might, at least, not frustrate the end, for which he was manifested. Had he in so many words declared to *them* that he was the Messiah, they were at that time prepared to understand the term as first and principally denoting not only a descendant of David, but the heir of his temporal kingdom. The mass of the Jewish people wanted only an avowal on his part that he was the Messiah, to induce them resolutely “to take him by force, and make him a king;” and to raise such a tumult as would effectually have prevented the designs of the “prince of peace,” if it had been successful ; and, if it had been otherwise, would have prematurely terminated his own ministry, and perhaps the existence of the Jews as a nation. Though he was indeed a king, yet was his kingdom “not of this world ; and therefore, when his hour was come, his servants did not fight that he should not be delivered to the Jews. To this end he was born, and for this cause he came into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth^a.” Conformable to this end was his teaching and

^a John xviii. 37.

conduct, both among the Samaritans, and among the Jews; and among both, "every one, that was of the truth, heard his voice."

Among the Samaritans, as we have seen, he explicitly declared himself to be the Messiah. We cannot suppose it probable, that the opinion which the woman expressed respecting the Messiah, antecedently to the declaration of Jesus, was peculiar to herself, or derived from any other source than the common traditional notions of her fellow-countrymen. In fact she so states it, as to imply that it was the settled and prevalent opinion. "I know that Messiah is coming,—he will tell us all things." She conceived of Messiah as a divine teacher; and expected that the time of his appearance was not far distant. Her fellow-countrymen, who "believed in him not only because of her word, but because they heard him themselves," at the same time that they expressed their firm conviction that he was the Christ, explained their notion of his office as such, by the declaration, "we know that this is indeed the Christ, *the Saviour of the world.*" Bishop Horsley has shewn at large, that the five books of Moses, which alone they admitted as canonical Scripture, afforded sufficient ground for this their expectation. But from their use of the term Messiah, which they could not derive from the Pentateuch, we may suppose that they were not

unacquainted with the later prophecies ; indeed it would be difficult to conceive otherwise, when we consider that the Samaritans lived in the very midst of the Jews, and that there was so great a similarity in the religious system of the two nations ; although we allow that they did not receive the prophetic books as *canonical* Scripture. Be that, however, as it may, they had not abandoned the principle, which the Pentateuch ought to have taught to the Jews, as well as to them, that he that was to come would be “a prophet,” and “a blessing to all nations.” And received in such a character, Jesus declared to the woman that he was the Messiah ; and other Samaritans, to whom she communicated the intelligence, heard him themselves. He doubtless enlarged, in their hearing, also upon the same truths which he had declared to her, respecting the living water, the worship of God, and the blessings about to be revealed ; and probably contributed to the maturity and definiteness of their expectations respecting the salvation of the world, by some such declarations as he had lately made to Nicodemus ; who like the Samaritans, had attained to a conviction, that he was “a teacher come from God.”

Comparatively few of those, whom our Lord had to instruct unto the kingdom of heaven, had either the correct views, or the candid

dispositions, of the Samaritans and of Nicodemus. When, therefore, we follow Jesus into Galilee, where, until the next passover, "he taught in their synagogues, and proclaimed the glad tidings of the kingdom," we do not find that he was so explicit in his declarations. Yet it is obvious, that what he taught was the same in substance, and preparatory, "as they were able to bear it," to that final avowal of his Messiahship, without which he did not leave even the Jews, who were so ill-prepared to understand it aright. Each of the two first Evangelists has given us a summary of the topics, which for a time formed the subject of his discourses ; and St. Luke has handed down to us a notice of some leading particulars in the remarkable discourse, which, after some time, he delivered in the synagogue of his own city Nazareth. We at least, after having been acquainted with his previous statements, cannot be at a loss with respect to his meaning and design in those annunciations and exhortations, which we shall now very briefly notice.

St. Mark relates, that Jesus coming into Galilee, "preached the Gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand ; repent ye, and believe the Gospel^a." It will doubtless occur

^a Mark i. 14, 15. See also Matt. iv. 17. Luke iv. 15. John iv. 45.

to every one, who hears these words, how *similar* they are to the tenor of John's preaching in Judea, and probably, therefore, to his more recent preaching in Galilee. Yet it is never said, by any Evangelist, that "the glad tidings of the kingdom" were preached by the Baptist; for the proclamation of the Gospel itself was peculiar to that office, to which Jesus was anointed; as he himself expressly stated shortly afterwards in the synagogue at Nazareth. Both Jesus and his forerunner announced the approaching establishment of the kingdom of heaven; and urged it as a motive to repentance. But Jesus advanced still further, when he said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." We may suppose that he enlarged upon those "signs of the times," which, when compared with the intimations given by the prophets, shewed that the season marked out by them for the advent of him whom they predicted had fully come. The kingdom of God was therefore not only near at hand; but the glad tidings of it, which explained its nature and object, as well as its approach, were then to be proclaimed. Jesus himself was the anointed herald, of whom John had already said to his disciples, that he "spoke the words of God, and testified that which he had seen and heard, and that God had given all things into his hand." Jesus, therefore,

did not only continue to urge the call to repentance, but also demanded a ready belief of the glad tidings which he proclaimed. But, because his hearers had erroneous views of the nature of the Messiah's *kingdom*, he did not on that account adopt another term; for the term itself was perfectly proper. It was his principal aim to lead them to affix right ideas to it, and to attend also to the other characteristics by which the future dispensation, and its author, had been described.

Probably the discourse at Nazareth is only a specimen of the method which he adopted in other places. But we know that there, at least, he taught his hearers to expect and seek after spiritual blessings; and to consider him as appointed to proclaim the offer, and to accomplish the bestowment, of them. Having, on the sabbath-day, stood up to read in the synagogue of his native city, he found the place of the prophet Isaiah, where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord^a."

^a Luke iv. 16—22. Isai, lxi. 1—3.

Well might Jesus begin to say, when he had closed the book, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." For never did circumstances more accurately correspond to prophetic description, than the condescension, doctrine, and beneficent works of Jesus to these anticipations of Isaiah. I say, anticipations; for surely Isaiah "spoke not these things of himself, but of some other" and greater man; even of him, who was the fruitful and animating theme both of himself and all the other prophets. From this Scripture, therefore, may we begin and preach Jesus as the Christ; that is, as the word signifies, as the Anointed; as him "upon whom is the Spirit of Jehovah, because Jehovah hath anointed him to preach the Gospel to the poor, and the acceptable year of the Lord" to those whom he, as the Son, can make free, and translate them into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

If, then, we listen to the statements, which our Lord and Master advanced respecting himself, principally by applying to himself the predictions of the prophets, we cannot be ignorant that he claimed a divine commission, as "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power," to give liberty, light, and salvation, to all that feel, and lament, and acknowledge, the slavery, darkness, and peril of sin;—that he came in that fulness of the season which God had foreseen, appointed, and

prepared, and which the prophets had circumstantially described ;—and that he was no other than the promised Messiah, the desire of all nations, the Saviour of the world. Of the certainty of these momentous and consolatory truths God hath, “by many infallible proofs,” “given assurance unto all men ;” and it will shortly be our endeavour to point out to you, and to elucidate, several passages of our Lord’s discourses, in which he appeals to, and enforces, the evidences of his divine authority.

But allow me, before I conclude this Lecture, to call your attention to one remarkable circumstance, with regard to these appeals and reasonings of our Lord. They were not advanced in the earliest part of his ministry ; nor at all, until the opposition and objections of the Jews was excited against him ; and scarcely ever publicly but upon such occasions. And those particulars, the public notice of which was not called forth in this manner, were pointed out to his disciples in private, more especially towards the close of his ministry. But both at the beginning, and during the whole course, of his ministry, the *evidences* themselves were furnished in great abundance. For while he proclaimed in their synagogues “the glad tidings of the kingdom,” he also “healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.” But he left these mighty

works, and the other divine attestations to his mission, to speak for themselves; until either a denial of his claims rendered it necessary to appeal to them, or cavils against the reality and conclusiveness of those evidences led him to refute the objectors. He did not, like the Arabian impostor, boldly claim a divine mission for which no sufficient proof appeared; nor did he vauntingly magnify and set off some seeming evidence, which, without such a special notice, might never have been observed. He was too well aware of the justice of his pretensions, of the publicity and splendour of his miracles, of the notoriety of the prophecies, and of their manifest fulfilment in himself, to think any such laboured and suspicious proceeding necessary. He was ready to allow that sufficient evidence might justly be expected; and, accordingly, one of his earliest remarks on this subject, was that which he made previously to his cure of the nobleman's son at Capernaum; "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe^a." Signs and wonders he did therefore perform; but I find not that he expressly connected his miracles with his doctrine, so as to *argue* with those who saw the miracles, until he wrought the cure of the paralytic^b; for the purpose of proving his right to say to him, "Son, thy sins

^a John iv. 48.^b Matth. ix. 4—6.

be forgiven thee.” But it was not until the succeeding passover, that he again thought it necessary to argue with those who saw and heard him ; and then it was, that, being brought before the ruling powers for a supposed breach of the sabbath, he delivered that eloquent and comprehensive defence of his mission, the whole of which will be reviewed in our future Lectures, and the first portion of which will form the next subject of our consideration.

The subjects which have been brought before your notice this day are fruitful in topics of practical instruction. I might take occasion to caution you against the prejudices and hardness of heart, which may lead you to be offended in Jesus, by setting before you the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, and that murderous attempt, from which a miracle only preserved our Lord. I might enlarge upon the warnings which he at that time gave them, lest, by a just retribution for the non-improvement of religious privileges, they should lose them, and others only be benefited by them. I might recommend to you the candour, the earnestness, and the faith of the Samaritans ; and shew what encouragement may be derived from observing the condescension which our Lord manifested to their infirmities, and the readiness with which he staid with them, and instructed them. I might exhort you to “ask of him, who will

freely give you to drink of that water of life," by which the thirst after sin and worldly gratifications is quenched, and the thirst after righteousness satisfied. I might entreat you to listen to him, who preaches "to all nations the glad tidings of great joy, that unto them is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord." And I might, in fine, recommend to your serious consideration that exhortation with which Jesus accompanied his proclamation; "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel;" reminding you also of the necessity, the nature, and the genuine effects of such a "repentance towards God, and of such a faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But time only permits me to express an earnest desire, that none of these considerations may be forgotten in your private meditation, and that they may be made the subjects of earnest prayer. For scriptural knowledge will little profit us, unless we are thereby made "wise unto salvation;" unless the things which "happened unto others for ensamples, and which are written for our admonition," are suffered to operate for our warning, and encouragement, and guidance; unless we know, and also are established in the love and belief of those truths, which, in the sacred pages, have been so clearly revealed. It will little avail you to receive the best instructions, and in your judgment to be convinced of the certainty of them, unless "with the heart you believe unto righteousness, make confession

with the mouth unto salvation,” and “in all things adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour.” “Wherefore, give diligence to make your calling and election sure ; for if ye do these things, if ye add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity ; if these things be in you, and abound, they shall make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and so ye shall never fall ; but an entrance be ministered to you abundantly into his everlasting kingdom^a.” And soon will he accomplish that prayer which we offer, when we assemble round the opened grave. Soon will he “accomplish the number of his elect, and hasten his kingdom.” Soon will the time of his second coming be fulfilled. Soon will each of us be consigned to that grave, in which we must await the summons of that day. “The kingdom of God,” with which our final redemption shall draw nigh, “is near at hand. Repent ye therefore, and believe the Gospel.”

^a 2 Pet. i. 5—11.

LECTURE V.

THE OCCASION OF THE DISCOURSE RECORDED IN
ST. JOHN'S FIFTH CHAPTER, AND THE PERSONS TO
WHOM IT WAS ADDRESSED.—ILLUSTRATION AND
ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST PORTION OF IT.

St. JOHN V. 17—20.

Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.

IN the concluding words of our text our Lord commences that important discourse, which first suggested to the Lecturer's own mind the subject to which he has solicited your attention; which guided him in the formation of his plan; and the successive portions of which, in their order, will come under review in this, and in many subsequent Lectures. Our first endeavour will therefore be, to explain the circumstances which called

forth this enlarged statement of the claims of our Lord ; especially as our attention will thereby also be directed to some other declarations, which he made on occasions of a like nature. For these several statements mutually illustrate each other ; and also suggest some reflections, which are, perhaps, peculiarly appropriate to the day on which we are assembled^a.

The discourse in question was delivered very shortly after the cure, which our Lord had miraculously wrought at the pool of Bethesda, upon one who, for a period of thirty-eight years, had been afflicted with an infirmity, and was then waiting beside the pool, that, upon the troubling of the waters, he might step in, and be healed. Jesus not only healed him immediately, but also directed him to take up the bed on which he lay, and to carry it thence to his own house. This procedure afforded a full and public demonstration of the reality of the cure ; nor did the man hesitate to comply with the injunction. And when he was told, that, as “ it was the sabbath-day, it was not lawful for him to carry his bed,” because the Jews refused, even with superstitious scrupulosity, to carry any burthen on the sabbath, the man deemed it a sufficient defence to answer ; “ He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy

^a This Lecture was delivered on Easter-Day.

bed, and walk.” Yet, until he was afterwards accosted by Jesus in the temple, he had not known that it was Jesus who had made him whole ; because Jesus had, at the time, suddenly “conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.” When however he thus became acquainted with the person of his benefactor, “he departed, and told *the Jews*, that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.”

The Evangelist then adds, that “*the Jews* did, therefore, persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.” It is very obvious, that this is not to be understood of the attempts of isolated individuals, much less of any ebullition of popular indignation ; but of a legal procedure commenced against Jesus, by persons in authority ; with whom, of course, it rested, to enforce that provision of the Mosaic law, which assigned capital punishment to a breach of the sabbath. A prosecution was doubtless commenced against him by the Sanhedrim, upon the information of the man who had been cured ; as the original word, used in this place by the Evangelist, distinctly informs us^a. And though it is observed, that “*the Jews* persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill him,” yet the same phrase is used in many other passages of the

^a Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἘΔΙΩΚΟΝ τὸν Ἰησοῦν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. v. 16.

Gospels, where we cannot properly understand it of any others, than of the men in authority among the Jews. Thus we are told, that “the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John, to ask him, who art thou?” It belonged to the Sanhedrim, officially, to make such an enquiry.—We are told that “Jesus would not walk in Jewry, because *the Jews* sought to kill him;” and that though there was at that time “much murmuring among the people concerning him, no man spake openly of him, for *fear of the Jews*.” And the reason of this sufficiently appears, when we read, that afterwards “*the chief priests and Pharisees* had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him;” and that, even at an earlier period, “*the Jews* had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.”—Again we are told, that “Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to *the Jews*, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.” Caiaphas was the *high priest* that same year; and we know that the advice specified was given at “a council gathered by the chief priests and Pharisees” after the raising of Lazarus, in order to consider what must be done to prevent the national danger, which they thought likely to result from the growing popularity of Jesus^b.

^b John i. 19. vii. 1, 13. ix. 22. xi. 47—57.

There can, therefore, be no reasonable doubt, that this discourse of our Lord was *a defence of his conduct delivered before the ruling authorities at Jerusalem.*

Behold, Jesus, then, having done a miracle, at which, as he afterwards observed, "they all marvelled^a," summoned before the rulers of the Jews to answer for his life, "because he had done these things on the sabbath-day." Afterwards, when "he was oppressed and afflicted," and brought before the same assembly, he avowed himself to be the Christ; and having referred to the prophecy of Daniel, respecting the future glory of the Son of man, he assented to their inference from thence, that he thereby claimed to be the Son of God. At this time he did not, in so many words, declare that he was the Christ; for "his hour was not yet come." But he declared, and that fully and openly, his claim to those attributes, which their Scriptures ascribed to the Lord's anointed; nay, he largely unfolded and reasoned upon them; for this was yet "the day, in which Jerusalem might have learnt the things which made for her peace, before they were hid from her eyes."—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," was all that he at first answered to those things, which they witnessed

^a John vii. 21.

against him; and he left the mysterious and unhesitating assertion to work such effect as it might. They conceived that he had now, “not only broken the sabbath,” but spoken blasphemy. And, assuredly, we can put no obvious and consistent sense upon the words, but that which they put upon them, viz. that “he called God his own proper Father, making himself equal with God^b.” For he thereby explicitly declared, that his own performance of miraculous works of mercy was to be placed in the same rank, and was defensible upon the same grounds, as the daily exercise of the bountiful Providence of the Father of the Universe, to whom every day is, in this respect, alike. If he were not “equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead,” and, even as the Son of man, acting in perfect unison with him, then, according to the injunctions of their law, they now *justly* “sought the more to kill him,” on account of the words which he had spoken. But if it were otherwise, then he who was the Son of the Father, in a sense in which no other being is, could justly appeal to the example of his Father; and he who was, equally with him, Lord of the sabbath, might, if need were, dispense with its observance. Then was he proved to be authorized

^b “πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγε τὸν Θεόν, ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ Θεῷ.”
v. 18.

to give such a command to the impotent man, in order to shew his power over the sabbath, though it appeared to them a violation of it. "If they did not believe him, they might have believed the works;" and both this miracle, and all that he had before wrought, proved that "the Father was in him, and he in the Father." To these works, and to the various other evidences of his authority, he appealed in his discourse on this occasion; and they could justify no other conclusion, than that the Father had sent him. The rulers, whom he addressed, were thereby so far silenced, and convinced, as not to venture to put him to death as a blasphemer; either because they had not yet fully steeled their hearts against all evidence; or because they feared the people, and shrunk, for a time, from the unhallowed attempt to put him to death, and thus fill up the measure of their fathers' crimes.

At the succeeding feast of tabernacles, when Jesus referred to this wish to compass his death, some of the people seem to have been aware that their rulers entertained such a design; though others professed, at least, to be ignorant of it, and answered, "Thou hast a devil; who goeth about to kill thee?" Jesus took occasion to remind them of this miracle, which he wrought at the preceding passover, and of his arraignment in consequence of it; and, then also, he defended his conduct with

regard to the supposed breach of the sabbath, though upon grounds somewhat different. "Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers,) and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day? Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment^a."—The incident here referred to seems to have been the first instance of the disregard of the sabbath imputed to our Lord. But it is remarkable, how many of our Lord's most signal miracles were wrought on the sabbath-day. And we know how frequently he thereby gave umbrage to the Jews, and occasioned both many of the objections, which were expressed to him when present, and also the insinuations, which were circulated among the people to his disadvantage. But we should ever bear in mind the sanction which his conduct in this respect received from the miracles themselves. On one occasion, when "the Scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him," he

^a John vii. 21—24.

wrought a miracle, under circumstances of peculiar force and significancy. He commanded the man with the withered hand, publicly to stand forth in the midst of the synagogue; he then entered upon the disclosure of principles specially directed against their secret reasonings, opinions, and intentions; and lastly, by causing the stretching out of the withered hand to be attended by the complete restoration of its muscular power, he did, indeed, prove to them that he, the Son of man, whom they had summoned to their bar, was “Lord even of the sabbath-day^a.” As such, he has, indeed, connected with the *sabbath* a portion of “that liberty wherewith he maketh us free.” But while we refuse to be “entangled again in the yoke of bondage,” let us not break through all restraint. Let us remember, that, by establishing the exceptions, he has proved the rule with respect to sabbatical observances; that we have no countenance from him to venture beyond the limits which he has marked out; and that he has marked them so definitely, that “he that runs may read.” If any one here present has had doubts respecting the moral obligation, and the preceptive detail, of sabbatical observances; if any one’s conscience suggests that he may be guilty as concerning this thing; let him peruse, compare, and

^a Luke vi. 1—11.

study, all that our Lord did and taught respecting it, the very copious records of which form so prominent a feature in the Gospel history; and I doubt not that he will derive the fullest satisfaction, and the clearest light and direction, on a subject most essentially connected with the prosperity of personal, family, and national religion. Our Lord has summed up the whole doctrine respecting it in two short but expressive apothegms. Each of these rescues the subject from Pharisaical superstition, but each also enforces the proper observance of the great and original precept, which was coeval with the creation of mankind; and the latter will well prepare us to enter on the consideration of our Lord's discourse before the Sanhedrim.

“The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.” It is a day, the observance of which, whatever be its use, cannot be supposed necessary to the absolute and indefectible glory either of our Creator, or of our Redeemer. Man, therefore, was not created merely that he might observe the sabbath; for it was instituted after the time of man's creation, and because he existed; and its design and utility result from the relation between him, and his God. By considering, therefore, both the present circumstances and the future destination of man, let the command be interpreted. It is designed for the full benefit of

a creature, living in this world as a partaker of flesh and blood ; surrounded by the present claims of time and sense, and of social and terrestrial connections ; but who also is destined for a better world, for spiritual blessedness, for an eternal portion, for communion with “ the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven, with God the Judge of all, with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.” Conformable to both these considerations must be our observance of the sabbath. Go and learn what this means, “ I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,” and you will see that, while God requires works of piety, he no longer demands them in the particular form of public prayer and praise, if his providence has either placed us in circumstances where the exercise of them is clearly impracticable, or has presented to us urgent claims for the performance of acts of laborious and persevering benevolence to others. But still must we be “ fervent in spirit, serving the Lord ;” though “ he that loveth God, must love his brother also,” and “ provide for him things that are needful for the body.”—For go and learn also, that “ the sabbath is made for man ;” that God hath blessed it, and sanctified it, and required that it be observed, and that its holy design be remembered. And we shall then see, that we must

esteem it “a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable.”—We shall then be convinced, that on this day we must “honour him, not doing our own ways, nor speaking our own words, but delighting ourselves in the Lord.” Then, “for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” we shall be “blessed in our deed.”

Let the mind of a conscientious man be impressed and directed by such views, and he will be no unskilful casuist in this matter. This is, indeed, a day of rest; it is a day on which we are to rest from our worldly employments. But it is so, principally, in order that we may rest from worldly cares, and sinful desires; that we may repose in God, and diligently and earnestly prepare for an eternal sabbath of perfect holiness and bliss. It is true also that our Lord has conveyed to us those views of this important subject, which are usually and rightly summed up in the observation, that works of piety, necessity, and charity, are lawful on the sabbath, and not a breach of its rest. But it were earnestly to be wished, that Christians, while they condemn, as justly they may, a Judaical observance of the sabbath, had not often run into the opposite extreme, and used their Christian liberty in a manner, which their Lord and Master would have condemned, even more severely than that merely ceremonial observance, which the erroneous traditions of the Jews had recommended and sanctioned.

But the most important principle yet remains to be noticed ; for it declares to us what we have so much need to call to mind, the sanction of the commandment.—“ The Son of man is Lord, even of the sabbath-day.” I doubt not that you have already referred this declaration to the precepts and decisions which we have been reviewing ; and to the miracles, with which they were accompanied, and by which their authority was established. I doubt not that you have already anticipated the remark, that, as on this day, the Son of man rose from the dead ; and also, that on that same day, which we, in imitation of the Apostles, call “ the Lord’s day,” our Lord did, generally, at least, shew himself to his disciples after his resurrection ; that on that day he poured out the seven-fold gifts of his Spirit ; and, to his beloved disciple, “ being in the Spirit on the Lord’s day,” shewed the things which should be hereafter. Therefore do we, ‘in imitation of the first followers of Christ, assemble for public worship on the day on which our Saviour rose,’ that we may thereon “ continue stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” But this authoritative claim of our Master and only Saviour, has a much more ancient original, and includes a much more extensive obligation. Why was the sabbath instituted ? “ Because that on the seventh day God rested from all his work which he created and made ; and, therefore, blessed

that day, and sanctified it." And who *rested* from his work, but he that *made* the worlds? And by whom, and for whom, were "all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether visible or invisible; and by whom do "all things consist, but by him who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature;" who is before all things, and, therefore, heir of all things? And who is he but the Son of God; the same that is also styled the Son of man; who "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and declared to us the Father, whom no man hath seen or can see;" and received of his Father the promise of the Holy Spirit: to whom, as the Son of man, is given, according to prophecy, dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; and who will one day come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory? The Son of man is, therefore, Lord of the sabbath, as the Creator and upholder of the universe; as the angel of the covenant to his people in the wilderness; as the Mediator of the new covenant; as the first-begotten from the dead; as the head over all things to his Church; as the judge of quick and dead. *His* is the commandment; *he* has imposed, and ratified, and declared, our obligations to this reasonable service; and to *him* we must give account.

Thus sacred is "this day, which the Lord hath made." Thus are we bound to "rejoice and be

glad in it." Thus intimately is it connected with all that God has done for man, and with all that he has revealed of himself to man; sanctioned and recommended, as it is, by all that is great in the Creator, merciful in the Redeemer, and consolatory in the Sanctifier. Thus does the observance of it rest, not merely on the narrow and slippery basis of human recommendation, and general expediency, but on the extensive, solid, and immoveable, foundation of divine and explicit authority.

We have not in this lengthened discussion been wandering from the principal subject of this day's Lecture. For it has been stated to you, that the sublime discourse, to the consideration of which we must now proceed, was a defence made by our Lord, against the accusation that he had violated that sabbath. We shall now, I trust, be prepared more fully to understand, and more duly to appreciate, the exalted claims which he therein advances as the Son of the Father, acting in his mediatorial capacity as the Son of man; and which we have, in fact, already deduced in a great measure from other parts of his instructions on this subject, compared with the general tenor of Scripture. The views which have in this manner come before us, will probably be thought to illustrate the words with which our Lord commenced his answer to the objections of the Jews. "My Father worketh

hitherto, and I work.” That remark clearly shewed them what was the nature of the claim which he advanced. And he was so far from rectifying their interpretation, (or misinterpretation, as some would fain have it,) that he proceeded more fully to unfold his claim; and to state all its bearings, circumstances, and consequences, even until the consummation of all things.

“ Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, which hath sent him.”

These words remind us of the statement which our Lord made to Nicodemus, that “ he spoke that which he knew, and testified that which he had seen; for that he, who alone had ascended into heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven, could testify of heavenly things.” He

now fully unfolds to those, who conceived that his recent declaration was presumptuously spoken, the origin, object, and extent of his commission as the Son of man; of which his authority over the sabbath was but a part. He announces his perfect acquaintance with all the counsels and proceedings of the Father, in consequence of the love of the Father to him. And though he was now acting in *subordination* to the Father, as *sent* by him to execute a divine commission; and though he “did nothing of himself, but what he saw the Father do;” yet his knowledge was not more extensive than the authority committed to him. For as “the Father sheweth him all things that himself doeth,” so also “what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” Hence, if such were his authority and power, it was no presumptuous statement which he had advanced, when he said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Nay, “the Father would shew him greater works than those,” at which they had already marvelled, that “they might marvel” the more. For though the miraculous works which he had already done, furnished such evidence of his official character and authority, as ought to exempt him from the charge of unjustly asserting a claim to a parity of operation in conjunction with the Father; yet they would see him “raise the dead and quicken them;”

not, as the prophets of the Old Testament, by external and visible applications, through the instrumentality of which his Father then raised them, but evidently by his own power, and at his own will.

But our Lord is not here principally intending to speak of his eternal generation, of his pre-existence, and of his glory with the Father. Those doctrines are in other places distinctly revealed, and they alone are *consistent* with the statements here made. But Jesus is immediately describing the authority and work of the Son of man, as appearing among men in the form of a servant, to finish the work which the Father gave him to do; as acting therefore in a subordinate capacity, though in unison with the Father; as sent to ratify and promulgate the new covenant, of which he was the visible Mediator, with the same authority, which belonged to those dispensations of the Old Testament, which were conducted more expressly in the name of the Father. Even then, indeed, the Father was employing the agency of the Son, though it was not, as yet, so openly announced. But now, as our Lord stated, and as was evinced both by his past miracles, and by the "greater works" of which he spoke, "the Father, who himself judgeth no man, had committed all judicial authority to the Son." And as he now "spoke by his Son," therefore was the Son to be obeyed

with equal readiness, and to be received with equal honour. For the very end and design of this revelation was, “that all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;” a statement, which, although it applies to Jesus appearing in the likeness of man, yet would not consistently be applicable to any other, than to one who is also the Son of God, in a sense in which no other son of man is so. In fact, Jesus announced all that we have yet noticed, before he spoke of himself under any other character than the Son of the Father; although he afterwards states, that “authority is given to him to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” In fact, it was in consequence of his becoming incarnate, and therefore visible to us, and a partaker of our nature, that he proclaimed and procured to us the blessings of salvation. And therefore Jesus, speaking in his own person, adds the words; “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” This is a declaration which Jesus had already made to Nicodemus; and which apprizes those, who admit the authority of Jesus, of the nature of the salvation which he offers, and of the means by which it is to be obtained.

Our Lord proceeds, in the same solemn manner,

to make a further annunciation. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” The *concluding* words of this passage immediately introduce a reference to the general resurrection. In the *former* part of it he refers, either to those who were raised from the dead in the subsequent part of his ministry; or to those saints “ which arose, and appeared to many, after his resurrection;” or, as is more closely connected with the last verse, and more fully illustrated by the prophecies of the Old Testament, to the raising of the world from a state of *spiritual* death to *spiritual* life; or, it may be, to all these, for in all these is it fully verified.

But I am aware that there is another and an awakening interpretation of these words, which considers them as parallel to several difficult and mysterious passages in the prophetic writings, in other discourses of our Lord, in the Epistles, and in the book of Revelation. I allude, of course, to the literal interpretation of the expression, “ the presence of the Lord Jesus^a ;” and to that event,

^a Matt. xxiv. 3. 1 Cor. xv. 23. 1 Thess. ii. 19. 2 Thess. i. 9.

or course of events, which St. John predicts, by stating, that the righteous "shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years, though the rest of the dead shall not live again until the thousand years are finished." "This," adds he, "is the first resurrection^a." If any such interpretation, whether literal or figurative, be correct; if there is any consistency in the language of prophecy, by which we can as yet attain to its true interpretation; the event predicted is probably near, even at the doors, to us who live in these latter days. Time only can determine this. But, assuredly, whatever be our views of this matter, "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death has no power^b." For we cannot doubt, whether any one, who does not now "rise and walk in newness of life," can have any part or lot in such blessings. None but those, "who do God's commandments," can have any "right to the tree of life^c;" none else can look forward, with hope or complacency, to that awful and final transaction, of which our Lord next speaks, in words, respecting the interpretation of which we can entertain no doubt.

"Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth;

^a Rev. xx. 4—6.

^b Ibid. xx. 6.

^c Ibid. xxii. 14.

they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." These are, indeed, decisive words, and they speak of a decisive day; and we know that "God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man, whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." That event, which gives us so certain and so awakening an assurance, we are, this day more especially, commemorating. On this day we are placed, as it were, on another Pisgah, from whence we can both look back on scenes that are past, and on scenes yet to come, both of which alike display the wonderful works of God, both in mercy and in judgment, such as may attract the attention of the dullest eye, and arouse the feelings of the most sluggish heart. On this day we celebrate that event, which declared the acceptance of the ransom paid for our redemption, which shewed the triumph of the Saviour over sin and death, the curse and the grave; which has laid the sure foundation for our fondest hopes, and has made us rejoice in the clear promise and earnest of our future inheritance of "the purchased possession." "Thanks, therefore, be unto God for his unspeakable gift;" for "he giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The sabbath is ever a joyful,

though a sacred, day ; on which we may call to mind all that is consolatory, as well as all that is awful, in Revelation. For we celebrate it in commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection, by which he was " declared to be the Son of God, with power." And every argument which evinces to us the certainty of the event, also demonstrates to us the certainty of that declaration, that " he that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life ;" but also, on the contrary, that " he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Though, therefore, I wish not to check the feelings of gratitude and " triumph in Christ," but to encourage and excite them ; yet, referring to those last cited words of our Lord, in which he speaks of his coming to judgment, I would say in the language of our excellent Lightfoot, " I shall leave it to him, who hears and reads them, to make the most feeling and dread commentary upon them that he can, towards the awing of his heart to a preparedness against that dreadful time when it shall come^a."

^a Lightfoot's Harmony, in loco.

HULSEAN LECTURES

FOR 1821.



PART II.

LECTURES VI—XVII.



THE REASONINGS OF OUR LORD RESPECTING THE EVIDENCES TO
WHICH HE APPEALED IN CONFIRMATION OF HIS CLAIMS.

LECTURE VI.

OUR LORD'S RECAPITULATION OF HIS CLAIMS CONNECTED WITH A REFERENCE TO THE PRESUMPTION IN THEIR FAVOUR FROM HIS NOT SEEKING HIS OWN WILL.

St. JOHN V. 30, 31.

I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

IN these words our Lord recapitulates the declarations made in the opening of his discourse; and, while he in some measure enlarges them, he also passes on to notice those considerations, which evinced the justice of his claims, by first stating the presumption in their favour, which his whole life, conduct, and doctrine, suggested; and then the principle upon which plain and positive proofs were provided for their complete establishment. The principle, to which we here allude, is laid down in the conclusion of our text. On a different occasion, our Lord stated another, which is, in expression, the reverse of this; which, therefore, it will be expedient to compare with it, in

order that the force and application of each may be ascertained.

It being our object to consider the question of our Lord's divine mission in the precise point of view, in which his own discourses present it, we shall proceed on this occasion, first, to prepare the way for our future inquiries by the examination of the two *principles* which we have noticed; secondly, to consider the *statements* repeated, and enlarged, in our text; and, thirdly, the *presumption* therein also noticed in favour of the truth of those statements.

I. The principle laid down in the text is thus expressed; "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." This is briefly and generally expressed, without noticing the limitation, which it obviously admits and requires. We do not, universally, conclude, that every testimony so circumstanced is necessarily false; for we are continually acting on the contrary supposition. But we are satisfied in so acting, only when we are concerned with a person of known veracity, when we have no reason to suppose him influenced by undue motives, and when he is fully qualified, in point of information, to deliver a true testimony in the particular instance in question. But our unhappy experience of the deceit and falsehood of our fellow men, frequently disposes us to receive such unsupported testimony with

caution, even in the ordinary affairs of private life; and, in solemn and judicial proceedings, it is considered wholly insufficient. In such cases we at least suspend our judgment, unless we have independent corroborating testimony. And, therefore, our Lord, having granted the equity of such a maxim, proceeds, after having stated his record respecting himself, to specify some separate and independent testimonies in support of it. But if none of them had existed, it would not therefore follow, that his record was absolutely and necessarily untrue. On the contrary, in this, as well as in many other cases, we must learn from the person himself the claims which he advances, and then, having ascertained the nature and circumstances of the matter in question, we proceed to investigate and consider that which is offered in confirmation of it. Hence the maxim is to be interpreted as applicable, not to the *absolute* truth of the matter in debate, but to the grounds upon which we can properly *judge* of its truth, and to the degree of our conviction. Our Lord grants, that if he bear record of himself, and can offer *nothing more* than his unsupported assertion, his testimony is not true; that the maxim, in compliance with which they usually rejected such a record, is just, proper, and expedient; and, therefore, he appealed and referred them to the positive confir-

mation, which God had vouchsafed to supply for the satisfaction, even of the most scrupulous inquirer. But, at another time, when they cited this obvious, and to them familiar, maxim, and wished to urge it beyond its proper application, he then stated that the contrary maxim is, in some circumstances, really admissible, and that it was so with respect to himself. Teaching in the temple, he declared himself to be "the light of the world," and stated the consequences of such a doctrine. "The Pharisees, therefore, said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true : for I know whence I came, and whither I go ; but ye cannot tell whence I came, nor whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh ; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true : for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me^a." Our Lord here advances some assertions similar to those in our text ; and briefly alludes to one of those independent testimonies, which, in the subsequent part of the discourse more immediately before

^a John viii. 12—19.

us, he states more fully and distinctly. In the former part of it, as we have already seen, he is occupied in stating those claims, of the correctness of which he, who thus advanced them, had the fullest knowledge, inasmuch as he could not but "know whence he came;" and, therefore, if we find his words established by the mouth of two or three other witnesses, how can we, upon any principles of right judgment, refuse our assent to them? Nay, further, are we not often even independently of collateral testimony, and before we have at all proceeded to examine it, disposed to feel a strong and justifiable conviction that we may safely rely upon a single testimony; a conviction which is rather strengthened and matured, than newly produced, by any additional confirmation? Do not the general character, conduct, and aims, of an individual, and also the matter and manner of his statements, frequently induce us to confess, that there is a strong previous presumption in his favour, which recommends him to our favourable regard, patient attention, and unbiassed judgment? Such a presumption in favour of our Lord's divine mission and authority will be suggested to every candid and serious inquirer, who takes even a general view of his character, proceedings, and instructions; and he, who has most fully considered these, will most decidedly entertain such a

presumption. Our Lord himself frequently noticed the considerations by which it is suggested ; and, in our text, he adverts to it, in its natural and immediate connexion with what he had previously stated respecting his commission. In the two remaining divisions of this discourse, it will be our aim to illustrate each of these topics in the order in which they lie ; principally by citing, or alluding to, other passages in our Lord's instruction and history, which are parallel with them.

II. We were to consider, *secondly*, the statements which are repeated, and somewhat enlarged, in our text.—It will be remembered, that, upon being arraigned for a supposed violation of the sabbath, our Lord took occasion, in his defence, to lay before the Jews the whole extent of his commission ; within which that particular right, of acting as he had done on the sabbath, though important and extensive in its connexion, was in fact included. He spoke of himself as the Son of God, as if God were his own proper Father ; but with reference, not so much to his prior and divine glory, as to his commission and authority as the incarnate Mediator, and as invested with all judicial authority, “because he is the Son of man.” Having proceeded to state that he was commissioned to exercise that authority in all its bearings, even until its last and final exertion, when it would really and truly be the *judgment* of all mankind

at the general resurrection, he again addresses himself to the establishment of his authority, in answer to their disbelief of his being invested with it. And, in the outset, while he spoke of it as derived from, and exercised in, the name of the Father, he yet spoke of it as unlimited in extent. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth." After having branched out this his commission into all its bearings, with reference to the performance of greater works than he had yet done, and having spoken of its final exercise in the day when he shall appear no longer as a Saviour, but as a *judge*, he then, in our text, restates the source whence he derived his authority to execute judgment, and the original and character of that judgment itself: "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."—The words are few, but weighty, and important. In other parts of our Lord's instructions we find statements, the knowledge of which is necessary to the full understanding of this passage, and which fully elucidate the several particulars contained in it.

As "the Son can do nothing of himself," so he states that what he heard of the Father was his rule of judgment, and that the judgment administered according to such a rule is just. Hear the following similar statements: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him^a." Our Lord declared to his disciples upon another occasion; "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now have they no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also^b." In his concluding prayer, our Lord declares of his disciples, "They have kept thy word. They have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and they have believed that

^a John vii. 16—18. It was after these words that our Lord referred to the miracle, which occasioned the discourse now under consideration.

^b John xv. 15—21.

thou didst send me^c." In connection with the last clause, and in illustration of the connection of the words which Christ had heard of the Father, with the judgment of the last day, we may now cite another passage: "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak^d." We know that our Lord declared, even before Pilate, that "to this end he was born, and that for this cause he came into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth." We know also that he declared, that "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto,

^c John xvii. 6—8.

^d John xii. 44—50.

but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And as "the Father loveth the Son," so did the Son declare, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father^a."—We may now perceive the purport of our Lord when he said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Those words were spoken when our Lord was at Samaria, and when he foresaw, and was deeply interested in, the successful result of his approaching interview with the people of that place. And I would fain hope and believe, that, however little you may be convinced by any reasonings I may have to offer, yet that, as I have recited to you the words of our Lord more largely than is perhaps usual, you may be able to say with those Samaritans, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." I know not, indeed, how I could illustrate the words of our text more clearly than in the manner I have adopted, or how I may be likely more strikingly to exhibit to

^a John x. 17, 18.

you, the claims, which he, “whom we preach,” has upon your reverence, faith, and obedience. And, before I proceed to reason upon the argument which our text suggests to us, I would cite one other passage, which at once includes the same statement, in almost the same words, and which declares to us what is that will of God concerning us, which is revealed, accomplished, and proposed for our compliance, in the Gospel. “All that the Father giveth me,” said our Lord, “shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day^a.” And may we not truly remark, that “blessed also are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed;” who so receive, understand, and obey, those things which are written, that they believe, as indeed they have highest moral demonstration to induce them to believe, “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in order that, believing, they may have life through his name.”

^a John vi. 37—40.

III. That, as far as the subject before us this day gives occasion, we may convince the gainsayer, and assist the believer to build himself more securely on his most holy faith, let us now in the *third* place, proceed to consider that presumption in favour of the claims of Jesus, which he notices in the text, and in many other parts of his discourses : “ I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me.”

Was he not sent by the Father ? Then must he, that thinks so, believe, either that he knowingly palmed an imposture upon the world, and taught a cunningly devised fable ; or even that he was more weak than wicked, and published, under the influence of delusion and enthusiasm, the infatuated reveries of a heated fancy. Yet, if the latter and more charitable supposition be adopted, why do we find so much that is sublime and undeniable in theology ; pure, holy, and enlightened, in morality ? Could an *enthusiast* surpass all the ancient schools of philosophy ? Could such a teacher promulgate principles, which led even those who opposed the Christian system to reform their own ; which the wisest of men still allow to be consonant with the most improved dictates of human reason ; which have left speculation little exercise in religious and moral inquiries, except in demonstrating and arranging anew the important truths, which have been revealed, or in the

barren research of useless curiosities ; and which have in such a manner both advanced and extended the knowledge of religious truth, that a large proportion of the poor and unlettered inhabitants of Christian countries, attain to a more extensive, more certain, and more efficacious acquaintance with God and their duty, than the wisest Greeks and Romans ? If, with the Prussian monarch, we deny the great and more mysterious peculiarities of Christianity, and reject all as a divine revelation, we cannot do less than value and admire, as he is said to have done, its morality. We cannot but admit the truth of its statements respecting morality, the unity and spirituality of the Deity, and a future life. But how can we *separate* these portions from others, when inquiring whether the Gospel is a divine revelation ? And do not even the more mysterious parts of the Gospel doctrine provide us with a satisfactory elucidation of matters of anxious inquiry to sinful, ignorant, weak, dying mortals ; with the only information respecting them, on which we can place any reliance ? All surely is delivered as claiming the same authority ; how then can we select some as excellent, and condemn the other as the dictates of enthusiasm ?

But in what manner can the charge of enthusiasm be suggested, except by our own *reluctance* to admit these instructions as true ? And

how did the delusion of a Jew take an aspect and direction so entirely different from all established opinions and prejudices? And, if that were the case, how are we to account for the absence of all the characteristics of enthusiasm? We find no vehemence, pride, conceit, or uncharitableness, in Jesus. He had none of the impetuosity, forwardness, or haste, that we should expect to have found in an enthusiast. His whole doctrine, though unfolded by degrees, is harmonious and connected; and contains no visions or rhapsodies. Neither would enthusiasm have at all enabled him to verify ancient predictions, or to deliver others respecting himself and his Church, which equally have been verified. He could not have long persevered in attempting miracles, much less could he have made others believe that he wrought them, unless they were realities. We must then adopt some probable solution. And the supposition that he was sent from God, and performed *his will*, satisfactorily explains the whole mystery.

If he were an *impostor*, and knowingly deceived others, then he “sought *his own will*,” and was influenced by some sinister inclination, from which no one, engaged in such a cause, could be free, but one who had been sent from God, and sought the will, and spoke the words, of him that sent him. But such an imputation is so much at variance with the character and the

doctrines of Jesus ; with all that he did, and all that he omitted to do ; that it is in every point of view improbable. His object could not be covetousness ; for he continued in a state of poverty, and made no attempts to rise above it. He was so far from courting the favour of the rich and powerful, that he checked their disposition towards *himself* ; though he would fain have persuaded them to embrace the truths which he taught. He required of the rich young man to sell what he had, and to give the price, not to himself, but to the poor. We learn, incidentally, that Jesus also gave to the poor, even from his own scanty stock, which he committed to the care of his only faithless disciple, and that knowing his character. And trifling indeed were the opportunities which Judas had for dishonest gain, since he covenanted to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Though some “ministered to Jesus of their substance,” yet it was never sufficient to provide him, even the ordinary comforts, much less the elegancies, of life. And as he threw no temptations in the way of the rich to draw them to him during his life, so neither did he hold out any inducement of a gratifying nature. For he repeatedly declared, and the nature of what he taught and required abundantly tended to shew the propriety of the declaration, that “they that trust in worldly

riches," and therefore, too generally, those who possess them, would with difficulty enter his kingdom. Did we say that he spoke of a kingdom? We may ask, then, with Pilate, was he a King; and did he advance and forward such a claim? Yes, but his was not a kingdom like those of this world, or that displayed "the glory of them." "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." Neither did he himself fight, or attempt any political innovation, authority, or disturbance; nor did he direct, or authorize, his servants to do so. He endured, with a patience, and a submission which he proposed as the model to all his followers, contempt, violence, and persecution. Ambition had no share in influencing his mind, or directing his actions. He predicted the establishment, not of an earthly, but of a spiritual, kingdom; and occupied most of his time, labours, and instructions, in teaching its nature, while he gave evidence of its authority. He did not profess to attain it by triumphs in the field, in which he should merely expose his life, but only by his actual death. That death he predicted distinctly, though figuratively, to the Jews; but to his own disciples openly, literally, and repeatedly. And in the way in which he predicted and expected, and for which he prepared, was

his kingdom set up. Yet it never offered any allurement to worldly ambition, but included, in its nature, all that was opposed to the desires, and, in its accompaniments and transactions, much that was at variance with the comforts, and hopes, and attempts of the ambitious, and even with human feelings. And Jesus himself never spoke of his attainment of earthly, but of heavenly, glory. Had he been an impostor, we may judge, with certainty, what would have been the nature of his aims; and we know also, that the time at which he lived, the expectations of the Jews at that time, the situation of his country, and the known feelings of his countrymen towards the Romans, and their hopes and disposition towards himself, would have abundantly favoured any such interested intentions. But he did not act consistently with the adoption and furtherance of *any* selfish design. Opportunities offered for the gratification of such, beyond what his fondest wishes could have anticipated; but he never availed himself of them. He courted not popularity for its own sake; he retired and hid himself when it was tending to actions in his favour; he repelled it, and cooled its fervour, when of a more quiet, though, as he taught his followers, mistaken character. He did not shew himself to the world, as one that sought to be known openly, in any way which human wishes or corruptions

could have suggested. He declared that he expected misrepresentation and obloquy ; nor did he act as one desirous to avoid it for its own sake. He did not court it, yet neither did he shrink from it. He did not seek his own glory, but taught, and exemplified, meekness and lowliness of heart.

Thus, both in the *nature* of his pretensions, and in the *means* by which he promoted and advanced them, was there an obvious and unequivocal indication that “ he sought not his own will.” His were not the artifices and measures, which alone an impostor would have employed. He proceeded in a manner wholly different ; and adopted, in great abundance and variety, with all publicity and evidence, such means as no impostor *could* employ. Such were his miracles, his acquaintance with the thoughts and dispositions of his hearers, the accurate adaptation of the events of his life and of his death and of all that he taught, professed, and accomplished, to the prophecies, promises, types, and spirit, of all the writings of the ancient Scriptures, and of the religious dispensations which they record. To pursue this train of argument further, would lead us insensibly to anticipate some subsequent topics. What we have just hinted may suffice to shew, how high this general presumption rises ; and how fully it applies to the most extensive review of the whole scheme described in Scripture,

though we can only touch upon some of the principal features even of a more confined view. But as we have endeavoured to shew, negatively, that Jesus did not seek *his own will*, let us now, though we have little space left for it, shew that we have a positive and sufficient presumption, that he “sought *the will of the Father, which sent him.*”

What can we answer to his own appeals on this subject? “Me the world hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me; and I seek not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. If I honour myself, my honour is nothing; it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say that he is your God; but ye have not known him; but I know him; and if I should say I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you; but I know him, and keep his saying^a.”—Is it not true, that the works of the world are evil; that depravity has formed a resisting medium through which even the rays

^a John vii. 7. viii. 45—55.

of divine truth have too often in vain endeavoured to penetrate ; and yet that the mists of error and sin have been dispersed, and the world enlightened, by the Gospel only ? In what other way has Jesus seen of the travail of his soul, except by bringing many to righteousness ? Has not his doctrine most eminently promoted the knowledge and glory of God ? Has it not been received, and valued, principally by the friends and lovers of whatsoever is holy, and just, and good ? And have we not, therefore, the most abundant reason to acquiesce in the argument urged by our Lord on another occasion, and which we cited in a former part of this Lecture. “ My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory ; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him^a. ”—We may indeed confidently deny that there was any unrighteousness in Jesus. For he did himself illustrate the purity of his doctrine by giving an exhibition of embodied virtue, by doing all things which pleased the Father ? How constant his devotion, how lively his faith in God, how great his zeal for the honour of his temple,

^a John vii. 16—18.

how strict his care to “fulfil all righteousness,” by the observance both of moral and positive precepts! How little did he consult his own ease, when he endured fatiguing journeys by day, and a houseless rest by night on the mountain or on the sea, that he might go about doing good! How little can we suppose that he was engaged in a pious fraud, when we consider that he referred to the approach, manner, and consequences of his death, as the proof and completion of his design. Yet he could neither foresee nor control these, except he were divine; and that we should have had no confidence or hope in him, if his predictions had failed. How could we still further expatiate on the complacency, with which he looked forward to such a death, on his patience and submission to the will of his Father, when the bitter cup was put into his hand, and when the approach of the betrayer ‘gave dismal note of preparation’ for that trial, scourging, and crucifixion. Meditate on his silence, meditate on his sayings, during these solemn scenes; and say, to what other conclusion can you come, than that he “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father^b!” Say, whether this was not he, “whom the Father sanctified and sent into the

^b Gal. i. 4.

world^a!" Say, whether it was not "for the sake of his disciples, and of those that should believe on him through their word, that he sanctified himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth^b!" Say, in short, whether this was not he of whom David spake, for David said it not of himself: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and truth from the great congregation^c." Assuredly Jesus "sought the will of his Father that sent him." "By that will we are sanctified, through the offering of his body once for all^d." And God "willeth also, that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" saved through the "one mediator between God and man, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time^e." Let us receive the testimony thus given of the Son of God. Him let us preach, and not refrain our lips from declaring,

^a John x. 36.


^b John xvii. 19, 20. ^c Ps. xl. 6—10.

^d Heb. x. 10.

^e 1 Tim. ii. 4—6.

to the great congregation, faith in his name for the remission of sins. In him let us believe, and him let us obey. Let us follow the example he has left us, and “prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” And “may the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ^f.”

^f 2 Thess. iii. 5.



LECTURE VII.

OUR LORD'S REASONINGS, ON THE EVIDENCE ARISING FROM THE WITNESS OF JOHN, ADDRESSED TO THE RULERS, TO THE MULTITUDES, TO JOHN'S DISCIPLES, AND TO HIS OWN.

St. JOHN V. 31—35.

If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man; but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

THESE are the words of him, whom we revere as “the faithful and true witness;” who needed not that any should testify to him either concerning man, or concerning himself; who knew full well man’s original disposition, and necessities; who knew also whence he himself came, all things that should in this world come upon him, and whither he went; and whose record, even when he bare witness of himself, was true. Yet as he came

to purchase for us, and to offer to us, salvation, he condescended to exhibit to us his heavenly credentials; and, in appealing to our understandings, he lowers himself to our capacities, by reasoning with us upon our own principles. This he did, not for his own sake, but for ours, "that we might be saved;" that we might be enabled to recognize his divine commission, and become acquainted with his benevolent designs, and "be saved from wrath through him."

That particular department of the Christian argument, upon which our Lord reasons in our text, was one peculiarly adapted for the conviction of his contemporaries. For they had attended personally on John's ministry, and had heard his testimony so soon afterwards confirmed by the proceedings, character, and doctrine, of our Saviour, and by the great events of the Gospel history. To us, also, it is both intelligible and important. For we have in the Gospels a record of the principal facts and statements of John's ministry, which, although concise, is yet sufficiently copious to supply us with the materials upon which we may reason, so as to come to a satisfactory decision. And whether it be our object to ascertain the doctrines of the Gospel, the nature and design of the sacrament of baptism, the method in which the Gospel was promulgated, or the evidences of its divine original, it will be

found advantageous in all these cases to attend particularly, and, if we follow the plan of the New Testament, primarily, to the ministry of John. By omitting to do so, we shall have neglected to employ an important portion of the materials provided for us; I had almost said, a portion, without a due attention to which, we shall probably entertain imperfect, if not erroneous, views. We propose not only to consider, in this Lecture, the words of our Lord in the text, but also to take occasion from them, to embody and arrange all the discourses, in which our Lord refers to the witness of John, principally with the view of leading his hearers to attend to the evidence which it afforded in proof of his divine mission and Messiahship^a. We shall notice,

1. Those addressed to the persons in authority among the Jews, of which our text is one.

^a The author has not included in this course a particular review of the baptismal doctrines and predictions of John, and of the connection between the missions and ministrations of John and Jesus, because, only a few months before the delivery of these Lectures, he had discussed the subject at large, as select Preacher for December 1820. He has therefore, in this Lecture, confined himself to the view more immediately suggested by the text.—The message of the Baptist to Jesus is more largely considered in Lecture IX; and Lecture XI, also takes some notice of the evidence arising from the miraculous, and other, circumstances attendant on the births of John and Jesus.

2. His conferences on the same subject with the multitudes, with the disciples of John, and with his own disciples.

I. We have already observed, that the discourse, the heads of which we are examining in detail, was delivered before the Jewish Sanhedrim. In the former and concluding clauses of our text, our Lord refers them, *generally*, to the testimony of John, as corroborating that which he advanced respecting himself. Some of them, at least, had probably acquainted themselves with the general tenor of John's instructions, by a personal attendance as his hearers. At any rate, they had certainly heard it from others, who had done so; and, in fact, they were so fully aware, from what they had thus heard, of his remarkable appearance, teaching, and proceedings, and of the attention which he had excited among the people, who believed him to be a prophet, that they had conceived it necessary to send priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, who he was, and in what character he adopted such a line of conduct^b? It was, indeed, the acknowledged duty and prerogative of the Sanhedrim to enquire into the justice of the pretensions of those, who assumed the prophetic character; and to this exercise of their public duty, our Lord *specially* refers in the third

^b John i. 19—27.

verse of our text ; and therefore, he addressed those, who had every qualification, which adequate information could give, to judge of his own pretensions, as far as the witness of John was concerned in supporting them.

Having defended himself against the charge which they had now brought against him, by claiming a divine commission, which, if admitted, would fully justify his supposed violation of the sabbath, and also prepare them to judge aright respecting all his other proceedings, he wishes them to consider the *proofs* of such a commission. Adopting a judicial principle, in arguing before an official body, he ceased to bear further witness concerning himself ; as they would not receive this as true, unless, in his defence, he could support his own assertions by other, and independent, testimony. Now there was another, who had appeared as his witness ; and who, both in public and private, had delivered a decided, consistent, and persevering testimony in his favour. Jesus himself was fully aware, that the witness which John bore was true ; both because he was fully acquainted with his own original and commission, and also because he had been present at, and immediately concerned in, that visible communication of the Spirit, and that audible attestation from heaven, which was the crowning evidence to convince John himself,

that Jesus was the person, of whose approach and office he had testified. Upon that evidence, John had afterwards enlarged to such as had considered his previous instructions. But as our Lord was addressing those, who had themselves taken the pains to obtain, officially, a statement from John's own mouth; he therefore more especially referred them to the answer which John had given. "Ye sent unto John; and he bare witness to the truth." For, "he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, that he was not the Christ;" "neither Elias," at least in person, and for the purposes which they expected Elias to fulfil; "neither that prophet," nor a prophet at all in the sense in which they looked for a prophet to appear among them, by rising from the dead. When a definite answer was demanded from him, he referred them to that prophecy of Esaias, of which their own interpretation, was in the main, correct; and explicitly declared, that his was the voice of him, that was to cry in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." In this he manifestly implied, that his office only authorized him to bear testimony to another; that he was, therefore, to be compared to "a sound, which, as soon as it has expressed the thought of which it is the sign, dies into air, and is heard no more^a."

^a Fenelon, cited by Bishop Horne in his *Considerations on the Life and Death of John the Baptist*.

Whether, therefore, they considered the prophecy, and its usual interpretation ; or the express testimony of John ; they could not have rightly considered, nor could they finally decide upon, his witness, unless they looked out for another, whose way he prepared, and whose forerunner he was. Of such a one, greater than himself in office, power, and dignity, he expressly spoke to them ; of one, who when John testified this, had already taken his station among them, but whom they had then not known ; one, who was to come after him, but who existed before him, and who was to be preferred to him ; one whose office was more extensive than his own, which merely authorized him to baptize with water^a.—We may consider Jesus as demanding of them, in the words of our text, whether these things had been duly considered ? They had known, or might have known, or might easily ascertain, that John had pointed out Jesus, personally and expressly, as him of whom he had spoken. If he were so, the question assumed an important aspect, and was of extensive connexion. Here was a declaration of the approach of the kingdom of heaven ; a claim to the office of its herald, and precursor ; and a specification of the person, whose approach was to be thus preceded and prepared. They had, therefore, to

^a John i. 26, 27.

meet this great question, to consider these extensive claims. If they neglected to do this, they would incapacitate themselves for judging in a comprehensive and sufficient manner; and would, probably, in consequence of their narrow and partial views, again object, as they were now doing, against some supposed breach of the law, or apparently hasty statement, while they were wholly inattentive to the miracles wrought previously, and at the time; and though they had never fully comprehended, or duly considered, the extent and purport of his claims. Hence they would be likely, both to blaspheme against the Son of man, who was now personally preaching the Gospel of the kingdom amongst them, and also against the Holy Ghost, of which John spake, and who, though not yet given, was hereafter to be given. Now our Lord never required of any, that they should have made advancements beyond the information and evidence which had been communicated to them. He was satisfied with, and commended, those, who were *not far* from the kingdom; who were willing to judge impartially of what had come before them; and who, although some doubts and difficulties remained, were willing to suspend their judgment, and not hastily to exaggerate such doubts, so as to dismiss all further inquiry. All would in due season be set before them; so much already had

been exhibited, that it ought to arrest their attention, and to claim their serious investigation. It remained with themselves to make a proper and successful use of what had been advanced, and of what was yet in reserve. John had long ago borne witness to the truth, and Jesus was now himself declaring his office and authority. Not that he himself received the testimony from man, but he had "received from his Father a commandment, what he should speak," and perform. They might derive this assurance, not from his words only, but from other sources. And these things he declared to them, "that they might be saved." If they refused to hear and consider them, theirs was the danger, and the responsibility rested with themselves.

But our Lord went on further to remind them, that, if they finally rejected the testimony of John, they were in a measure self-condemned. He was the burning and the shining light of that age and country; the excellence of his instructions, and their success and beneficial tendency, they could not deny; even they themselves, "for a season, were willing even exceedingly to rejoice in his light." Thus had they themselves, both felt and virtually confessed, his prophetic character. Some of them might even have been of the number of those Pharisees and Sadducees, who came to his baptism. But they were by him

warned, reproved, and convicted. They found that he proclaimed not that which they wished and expected; they saw that he would not be subservient to their carnal and temporizing policy; they saw their influence, authority, and interests, at stake; they felt their prejudices attacked and exposed; they were offended and alarmed; and therefore their joyful hailing of him who proclaimed the approach of the kingdom of heaven, their reverence for his character, and their admiration of his instructions, were succeeded by a sullen neglect, enmity, and contempt. The fact is several times explicitly and publicly stated by our Lord^a; and, in one passage, which we have yet to notice, to persons in authority, at a time, and in consequence of an incident in our Lord's ministry, of leading importance. You will readily suppose, that we allude to the question proposed to our Lord, after he had entered Jerusalem in the lowly triumph described by Zechariah, and had a second time purged the Gentiles' court of the temple. "By what authority doest thou these things; and who gave thee this authority^b?" The conversation which followed this question, places the connexion between John's testimony, and our Lord's mission, in a very clear point of

^a Matt. xi. 16—19; xvii. 9—13. Luke vii. 29, 30; xvi. 14—17.

^b Matt. xxi. 23. Mark xi. 28. Luke xx. 1, 2.

view ; though it is not always rightly represented by the commentators.

The question was proposed by the “ chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people,” under whose cognizance our Lord’s proceedings certainly fell. He answered by proposing another question. “ I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? of heaven, or of men?” that is, was it of *divine*, or of *human* authority? Now their answer was, that “ they could not tell ;” and Jesus, therefore, refused to tell them “ by what authority he did these things.” They had declined to answer his question, or rather they had openly declared their inability to answer it. Now this implied, either that they still allowed that John’s baptism possibly might be of divine appointment ; or that they had not come to an official decision ; or that they did not think themselves concerned to do so. The fact was, as we are fully informed in other places, that they rejected John’s baptism, and refused to allow its *divine* authority. But they reasoned with themselves, that if they should say thus publicly that it was *of men*, the people, who were fully persuaded that John was truly a prophet, would raise a tumult, and stone them. Their personal safety, therefore, prevented an avowal of their disbelief. Nor could they make

a declaration, which would coincide with the prepossessions of the people, without a virtual recantation of the opinions, which in their conduct, at least, they had hitherto avowed ; without a violation of consistency, as it regarded the past, an imprudent committal of themselves for the future, and a liability to be subjected to the unanswerable reproof of Jesus, “ Why then did ye not believe him ? ”

Yet this was not an evasive question, proposed in order to *bring* them into this dilemma ; though it is too generally so represented, or is left imperfectly explained. It was the most proper answer which could have been made, as a few brief remarks will shew. It reminded them of the words of our text, judicially spoken before them ; which, had they been duly considered, might have led them to a right knowledge of the source and nature of the authority of Jesus. And it also reproved them, because they neither admitted the authority of John, nor, because of their unworthy fear of the people, did they disabuse them of what they conceived an erroneous opinion ; though, as the guardians of religion, and the judges of prophetic claims, they ought, officially, to have done one or the other. By declining to give any definite answer to our Lord’s inquiry, they left him no opportunity of entering on such a line of argument, as would have evinced his authority

to do these things; yet he clearly taught them that the question, to which he required an answer, was a *previous* question, the decision of which would lead to an easy solution of their own. —You will perhaps ask, why did not our Lord take some *other* line of argument? I might answer, and the answer would be sufficient, that our Lord knew what was in man; and we might, with satisfaction, acquiesce in the conviction, that in this, as well as in other instances, he did all things well. But we can answer more fully, and state, that his question related to the very point of evidence which it was in this instance proper to consider. He had entered Jerusalem in procession, as the meek and lowly King of Zion, amidst the repeated acclamation, “Hosannah to the Son of David! Blessed be the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord!” This was a visible accomplishment of the prediction of Zechariah. Was, then, the authority, which Jesus claimed in the *temple*, conformable to the divine purposes, and to the intimations of prophecy? Assuredly it was. It was designed, as to its object, to effect the removal of the desecrating traffic, that was carried on in the house of his Father. It was designed to espouse the cause of the Gentiles, that the outer court might be restored to them, and that, according to prophecy, the house of God might be made “a house of prayer for all

nations^a.” That the Messiah should thus actually come in suddenness, and to the confusion of transgressors, to vindicate the honour of the house of God, as “the Lord of the temple,” and “greater than the temple,” was an especial subject of prophecy ; and it was foretold in immediate connexion with the prediction of that *Messenger*, whom John declared himself to be. For although, when questioned by the priests and Levites, he cited the words of Isaiah ; yet a passage of Malachi, in which he is also mentioned, specifies the same reason for his mission, and also connects it with the appearance of the Lord, whom the Jews expected, in the temple. “Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me ; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.—And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old.—And all nations shall call you blessed ; and ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of

^a Isai. lvi. 6, 7. Mede observes, in his sermon on this subject, that “the place alleged (by our Lord) to avow the fact, speaks of Gentile-worshippers, not in the words *τοῖς ἔθνεσι* only, but in the whole body of the context.” Works, p. 46.

hosts^a.”—By attending to the various and connected transactions thus predicted respecting John and Jesus, we at once discover the propriety of our Lord’s conduct on this occasion, and the evidence in vindication of his authority, which, under such circumstances, he pointed out as forcibly by declining any further statement, as if he had entered on a detail of the argument. If the authority of the precursor were admitted, it involved the admission of his own; if they had really so little considered the former question, as to be yet undecided, they then avoided, or hastily passed over, the proper and sufficient evidence which was yet open to their consideration.

But, though they were afraid to encounter our Lord’s arguments, and sought to avoid them, he left them not unreprieved and unwarned. In three parables,—that of the obedient and disobedient sons, who were requested to work in their father’s vineyard,—that of the wicked husbandmen,—and that of the wedding garment,—he exposed the guilt, impotency, and danger of their unbelief, and also predicted their approaching murderous rejection of himself, their forfeiture of the blessings of the kingdom, and the transfer of them to the Gentiles, whose cause he had been espousing, and who would bring forth the proper fruits.

^a Mal. ii. 1, 3, 4, 12.

They saw the purport of the parables ; they writhed under their severe correction ; they could not refrain from deprecating the accomplishment of his predictions ; yet they proceeded, even with increased eagerness, in the furtherance of their bloody designs.

Of the first parable he made an express application, which it will be expedient to notice with reference to our subject. He obtained from them a confession, that the son who first refused, but “ afterwards repented and went” into the vineyard, “ did the will of his father.” And he then answered, “ Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not ; but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him^a.” Our Lord here notices the excellence of John’s character, and the efficacy of his instructions. Such a consideration they ought not to have neglected. They had been reminded of it in our text, and themselves must have felt it, when they beheld the salutary effects produced by John’s labours, upon those whom they themselves had yet been unable to reform, even if they had indeed attempted to

^a Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

do it. Yet this had not induced them to retrace their steps, but had, perhaps, operated to strengthen their prejudices.—The same principle applied, and still applies, to our Lord's instructions, as well as to those of the Baptist. They are intelligible to those, who have neither leisure nor capacity for philosophical research, or systematic morality. The same Gospel, which is preached to the rich and learned, is preached also to the poor and illiterate. By one and the same Gospel must both be instructed, edified, and saved. Let us, then, value the wisdom and sublimity of its design and contents; let us also admire its universal adaptation and utility; and let neither the pride of station, nor the prejudices of learning, nor the vulgarity of a poor man's religious observances, his uncouth phraseology, and his imperfect, and often mistaken, opinions, prevent the serious examination, and cordial acceptance, of the same truths, which reform, edify, and comfort him. For they were not intended to remedy the disadvantages of station, and the defects of education, excepting only so far as holiness here, and happiness hereafter, may thereby be affected.

Such were our Lord's reasonings and statements, in connexion with the witness of John, as delivered to the ruling authorities of the Jews. We have now only to notice the more remarkable addresses of our Lord on the same subject to the

disciples of John, the multitudes, and his own disciples.

II. The earliest of these was on occasion of the memorable message sent to Jesus by John. The *disciples of John* had given him early information respecting the popularity and success of him, "to whom he had borne witness beyond Jordan." The Baptist had then, in the last of his discourses which is recorded, endeavoured to divest them of any jealousy respecting his own honour, by directing them to the remembrance of his former statements; by re-assuring them of the divine and superior dignity of Jesus; and by exhorting them to a reception of his doctrine. Being informed by them, at a later period, of the still growing fame of Jesus, of his repeated miracles, and especially of the raising of the widow's son at Nain, John actually sent them to confer with Jesus, and to obtain, from his own mouth, an answer to the question, "whether he was he that should come, or whether they were to look for another?" They, probably, as well as the rest of the people, were in some degree of suspense, because Jesus had not, in so many words, declared himself the Messiah. Our Lord retained them with him, until he had wrought several additional miracles; and then, in a brief manner, led them to infer his Messiahship, from the miracles which he performed; for they were

such as the prophets ascribed to the Messiah. He reminded them, also, that the Gospel was by him preached to the poor, according to another prophecy of Isaiah; and then cautioned them against suffering the faith, produced by such considerations, to be impaired and subverted by any inconsistency which presented itself to their minds between his humble appearance and their expectations. Thus our Lord at once shewed the correctness with which John had described him as one "mightier than himself," and as a teacher who "spoke the words of God;" pointed out the agreement of John's testimony, with the prophecies respecting the Messiah, and the miracles which he was to perform; and intimated the probability and danger of that rejection of his testimony, of which also the prophets had spoken.

The discourse which our Lord addressed to the *multitudes*, after the departure of John's disciples, also very fully discusses the character and office of the Baptist^a. Of these his own disciples entertained such an opinion, as made their views end in him, and, therefore, for a time, prevented the proper object of his mission. But there was no such danger with the multitude; but rather one of a contrary character. They were in danger of losing the impressions, which

^a Matt. xi. 7—19.

the appearance and preaching of the Baptist had produced. And yet they did not abate this respect for him, in order to transfer it to the Messiah; but were disposed to err, both with respect to him and his precursor. Our Lord, therefore, adapted his discourse to the character of the persons addressed; endeavouring to recall their former feelings, in order that he might direct them to a proper end and object. He reminded them of the earnest attention, which had been excited among them, by the solemn and unvarying testimony of that holy and self-denying man. He had appeared, not as the herald or attendant of an earthly monarch, though he proclaimed the setting up of a kingdom. They allowed him to be a prophet; but he was more. For, citing the words of Malachi, our Lord applied them to him; and declared that he was "the Messenger who was to prepare the way of the Lord." Thus he at once directed their thoughts to the kingdom of the Messiah, and pointed out what might prepare them to discern its real nature. He spoke distinctly of the introduction of a new religious dispensation; of the superiority of the least prophet of that dispensation, even to John; as more honoured, and more enlightened, and more successful. They as yet had been under the guidance of the law, and of the prophets. But each of these had prophesied of more glorious times.

Those times had begun with the appearance of John. Now the kingdom of heaven had commenced ; not guarded, like Mount Sinai, in order to repel and alarm ; but permitting, and even inviting, all to approach and enter. They expected Elias to come. Though no Elias, such as they looked for, would come ; yet he who was to come, he whom Malachi had predicted under ~~that~~ title, had already come ; for this was no other than John the Baptist. This was important information ; a statement to be attentively heard, and earnestly examined. And our Lord therefore added ; “ he that hath ears to hear, let him, therefore, hear.”

Thus did our Lord declare the proper view, in which they were now to examine the mission of John ; thus did he assist them in that examination, and direct them rightly to employ the means which already existed, for forming a correct decision, and which the progress of his ministry rendered continually more abundant. Yet he well knew, both from the past conduct, and present disposition, of that generation, and from his foreknowledge of their future proceedings, that the connected mission of John and himself, and the different conduct and demeanour which suited their respective functions, would not meet the prejudices, or engage the impartial consideration, of all. They had their favourite and obstinate

prejudices, which operated against each of these messengers. Two consecutive, but distinct, methods had been employed for the introduction of the kingdom of heaven. "John came neither eating nor drinking;" to him they objected, because he came in a severe and repulsive character; of him they said, "He hath a devil." "The Son of man came eating and drinking;" not declining to join in social and familiar intercourse with the world, and yet, however inconsistently, they found in this also a motive to reject and calumniate him. "Behold, said they, a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They appeared therefore not disposed to be satisfied with any thing, however expressly calculated to obviate and remove their prejudices. They therefore acted as perverse a part, as those "children," whom "when assembled in the market-place" for their pastime, no variety of proposal, suggested by a spirit of compliance and accommodation on the part of their companions, could persuade to join in the amusements of the hour. But however they might thus "reject the counsel of God against themselves," "the children of wisdom," all of candid and reflecting minds, would perceive and acknowledge that both these methods were adopted by divine wisdom, and that they might justly be applauded and admired.

As too many among the Jews were offended,

both by the austere demeanour of John, and the social one of Jesus, so the *disciples of John* were backward to approve of the latter, and exclusively admired the former. They therefore demanded of Jesus, why they, and the disciples of the Pharisees, fasted often, but his, like himself, did not fast, but ate and drank like others, without any such abstemiousness. Here also Jesus endeavoured to satisfy the well disposed inquirers; and, in several parabolical illustrations, shewed the propriety of this part of his conduct. These you will readily call to mind; and we have only time to observe, that he adopted, in one instance, the same figure in which John had instructed them respecting himself. For John had spoken of Jesus as the bridegroom, and of himself as the attendant of the bridegroom. And Jesus now observed, that his chosen disciples, as well as John, were attendants of him the bridegroom, but that he called them not to any premature austerities; because these comparatively were the days of their festivity. But after he had trained them up for their future work, “the bridegroom would be taken from them; and then they would fast in those days^a.” For the event to which he alluded, and for its consequences, he was gradually

^a Mark ii. 18—22. Luke v. 33—39. The inquiry seems to have been proposed, not only by the disciples of John, but also by the Scribes and Pharisees.

preparing them ; but if he adopted the procedure to which they alluded, so harsh a discipline, employed in the first instance, would too much discourage them.

The *disciples of our Lord* do not appear to have entertained any objection to the proceedings and appearance, either of John or Jesus. The fact, "that the bridegroom should be taken from them," was that, at the mention of which they were confounded, in whatever manner it was couched. They also expected, as other Jews did, and as the Scribes taught, that "Elias would first come, and restore all things ;" and, probably, at the transfiguration, they conceived that their expectations were about to be fulfilled. But their joy and eagerness was soon checked by the injunction to "tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man was risen from the dead." This recalled to their minds the parallel declarations made by their Master a short time before ; and they could not either understand "what the rising from the dead should mean," as applied to their Master, or how it could be reconciled with their past expectations, and present suppositions, respecting Elias. They proposed the difficulty to their Master, and received, in answer, a statement, calculated to remove their doubts, if not immediately, yet soon afterwards. With the citation of that answer, and of another remark of our Lord

to his disciples, we may conclude this review of his reasonings respecting John.

“His disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered, and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed; likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist^a.” And when the Son of man had “suffered many things,” and had “risen from the dead,” then did our Lord again direct their thoughts to that particular prediction of the Baptist, which he had himself also delivered, and which was then about to be accomplished; thus, in another instance, pointing out to them the difference of their respective functions, and the tendency which their consecutive ministrations had to accomplish the purposes of God in the establishment of his kingdom. “Wait, said he, in Jerusalem, for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence^b.”

We may, I think, derive from the whole series


^a Matt. xvii. 10—13. Mark ix. 11—13.

^b Acts i. 4, 5.

of our Lord's reasonings on this subject, and from a comparison of his remarks with the instructions, predictions, and transactions, to which they refer, a conviction of the completeness and force, even of this single head of evidence. It shews to us the divine authority of the witness of John; and how clear a light is from thence reflected on the authority of Jesus. And may we, therefore, be "children of wisdom," and justify its proceedings. We are men of like passions with those, who rejected the instructions both of Jesus and of John. We may be under the influence of prejudices equally powerful; we may, in like manner, be inattentive and obdurate. But, though John were "a burning and a shining light," he was not "that light, which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man;" he was sent only "to bear witness of that light;" to exhibit to the world, as it were, the dawn of the rising "Sun of Righteousness." But "the day-spring from on high has now visited us." "The true light now shineth." Let us "be willing," not "for a season" only, but continually and perseveringly, "to rejoice in the light of him, who declared himself to be "the light of the world." Let the convictions, which from time to time we feel, be encouraged, and not stifled. Let the resolutions, to which they give rise, not be "like the morning dew," and refresh us only for a time; but be so cherished

and renewed, as to abide the scorching sun of temptation and persecution. Let such a stedfastness be maintained, that hope may arise, and gather strength and maturity, within us. Yet a genuine and well-grounded hope cannot even exist in the soul of him, who does not know and obey the promises and precepts of the Gospel. But if hope has respect to the blessings which Jesus has purchased, and be founded on a scriptural faith, and attended by that "charity, which never faileth," it will then be "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, which entereth within the vail, whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." He, as the Baptist declared, is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And John also bare witness, "that he is the Son of God;" and solemnly said to his disciples, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him ^a."


^a John i. 29, 34; iii. 36.



LECTURE VIII.



OUR LORD'S APPEAL TO HIS MIRACLES AS ATTESTING
HIS DIVINE MISSION.



St. JOHN V. 36.

But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

IN whatever point of view the serious inquirer contemplates the facts and circumstances of the Christian story, or any portion of them, he cannot fail to be impressed with a conviction, that he therein discerns the arm of the Almighty not obscurely revealed, but employed for great and holy purposes. The evidence arising from miracles doubtless affords to us one of the most obvious and intelligible indications of this truth; and one which has been observed and acknowledged even by those, who have taken a less detailed and complete survey of the whole, and who have, therefore, perhaps, not attended much to the

evidence arising from the proceedings, character, and witness, of John. The Gospel records, however, present to us the latter of these as the earliest subject for our examination ; and no one, who has given to it the attention which it deserves, will be disposed to deny, that it affords a most satisfactory evidence of the truth of Christianity. In our last Lecture we took the particular view of this extensive argument, which was suggested by the words immediately preceding our text. In our text our Lord states, that the miracles which he wrought are “a greater witness than that of John.” Not that the one was of divine appointment and interference, and the other not ; but because miracles are the visible tokens of divine interposition, from which the inference is more immediate, and of which the evidence is more sensible. And, indeed, the witness of John, considered merely as the testimony of a zealous and holy person, and even as that of a prophet, is not complete without the evidence of miracles ; for these were necessary in order to prove Jesus to be the mightier one of whom he spoke. John’s ministry wonderfully prepared the way for that of our Lord, that he might, with more advantage, appear as the worker of miracles, and as the authoritative teacher of a more enlarged scheme. But the miracles themselves were the greater, more definite, and more unequivocal

demonstration of his authority, and of the divinity of his doctrine.

The words of our text might, indeed, be considered as referring, not merely to the mighty works which he performed in order to our conviction, but also to “the whole work which the Father gave him to do.” And, undoubtedly, from the great design itself, and its accomplishment, an argument arises which includes all others, and which sets them before us with the greatest advantage; because we then not only discern the force of each, separately considered, but of all as connected with each other, and as manifesting, both the unity and consistency of the design, and the completeness of its accomplishment. But that the words of our text have a more *limited* reference, appears from the phraseology which our Lord employs on other occasions. And in the first passage which we shall cite, there seems decidedly to be such an allusion to the very words of our text, as clearly to shew, that our Lord intended therein to refer to his *miracles*.

Shortly after the cure of the man born blind, some of the Jews, who, as the context shews, probably were persons in authority, “said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father’s name, they

bear witness of me^a.” In a subsequent part of the *same* conference, he again alluded to the “good works which he had shewed them from his Father;” and added, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.” To his disciples he delivered similar statements; which, being more enlarged, point out to us more fully the connexion of these miracles with the doctrines, in proof of which he wrought them; and the criminality of not attending to that proof:—“Believest thou not,” said he to Philip, “that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son^b.” Shortly afterwards, when speaking to his disciples of their future sufferings in his cause, he observed, “These things will

^a John x. 24, 25.

^b John xiv. 10—13.

they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now have they no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father^c."

The works referred to in these passages, of which our Lord spoke as already past, had been publicly exhibited in the presence of those whom he addressed. And the miracles wrought by the Apostles, in the name of Jesus, and through the prayer of faith, of which our Lord spoke as yet future, were afterwards exhibited with equal publicity. The Jewish people could not deny, and did not in fact doubt, that they were really miraculous works, impossible to the unaided powers of a human being ; although they conceived, that the authority of their traditions, and their received interpretations of the Old Testament, justified them in refusing their assent to the doctrines and dispensation, of which these were the sanction and demonstration. That dispensation and its doctrines are as important to us, as they were to them. But we are circumstanced with respect

^c John xv. 21, 24. Some of the passages here quoted will, in future Lectures, be more *particularly* considered.

to the miracles, which prove its divine authority, in a manner somewhat different. We cannot *see* them ; and to resolve, except we *see* signs and wonders, not to believe, would be to require that which would make them cease to be miracles. Ours, therefore, cannot be that sensible and striking impression of their reality and evidence, which would be felt by the subjects and spectators of miracles. Yet what we lose in this respect is abundantly supplied by the more enlarged knowledge which we have of the connection of miracles with other branches of evidence, then not so fully exhibited, and with the complete system of truth, of which they proved the divine revelation. Yet we do not lose much by the absence of such an overpowering evidence ; for a sufficient conviction of their *reality* alone is necessary to establish the conclusion ; and of that we have abundant evidence. It is, indeed, derived from the testimony of others ; but a reliance upon well authenticated, and well circumstanced, testimony, is as much a law of our moral nature, as the belief of the ordinary laws by which the universe is governed is of our understanding. We ordinarily act with as little hesitation upon a sufficient moral certainty, as upon the clearest philosophical analogy, or mathematical demonstration. We cannot in either case make our own personal experience the test of all possible facts ; and to

believe nothing, but that which we have ourselves seen, is as unreasonable, as it would be embarrassing. Whenever, therefore, distance of time or place prevents us from being spectators of any transaction, we can become acquainted with it only by testimony; nor have we any just ground to reject such testimony, if it be attended with the proper marks of credibility. The case is very little different, if the facts in question be of that character which we call miraculous. They differ from other facts principally with reference to the cause which produced them. It is essentially requisite that they should be subject to the apprehension and examination of the senses of mankind; but their miraculous nature is merely an inference from their reality as facts, and from a conviction that neither the ordinary procedure of nature, nor the agency of man, could have produced them. In our inquiries respecting them, we may justly scrutinize, with all possible accuracy, the testimony which reports that they occurred; we may with equal care weigh and compare the circumstances of the facts in detail, with a view of discovering whether there were any imposture or delusion. But if, after such an examination, the inference that they resulted from a miraculous agency, is the only tenable one; the nature of the conclusion at which we have arrived is by no means to be applied as an objection to its truth and

correctness. That the *ordinary* laws of nature are wise, useful, and constant, and that they are designed for the benefit of all creatures that live, affords no sufficient presumption that their progress may not be counteracted or superseded, to provide for objects so important, as the spiritual and eternal interests of man. And if such a design appear evident, as in the case of the Christian miracles, the end is confessedly desirable and necessary. The means by which we receive an assurance that the end is attained, though they involved a partial and temporary suspension, or counteraction, of the laws of the universe, did not at all supersede, or even interrupt, their *general* beneficial operations. Yet they conferred valuable personal benefits upon the individuals, who were the subjects of them, at the same time that they permanently provided for the continued consolations, and lively hopes, of all future generations.

The facts, to which our text refers, are those upon which our religion is founded; and, without allowing the truth of them, we cannot account for its success. For the pretence to miraculous powers, of such a kind, and under such circumstances, would, if they had not been real, have ruined the cause which it did so effectually promote. Now the Gospel records of these facts being so circumstantial, full, and perspicuous, we are thereby enabled to place ourselves, as it were,

in the midst of the scenes so described, and become qualified to judge, perhaps, as accurately as those who actually witnessed them, of their reality as exertions of divine power. We are therein furnished with the testimony of eye-witnesses ; with the written narrative of those things, which they, day by day, and from year to year, proclaimed by word of mouth, “ both to small and great,” both to Jew and Gentile ; in the midst of persecution and opposition, but without contradiction from those, who, if there were a possibility of denying them, were both interested and disposed to do so, but who endeavoured to suppress the propagation of Christianity, in defiance of these extraordinary facts, rather than venturing to deny their truth. Upon the *practical* proof, which these witnesses gave, of the correctness and fidelity of what they attested, this is not the place to enlarge ; they evidently themselves believed these things to have been as they related them. For no other motive, than the love of truth, can be assigned for their diligence and earnestness in promulgating the Gospel ; or for their steadfastness and patience under the trials to which their testimony exposed them. The written narrative which they have left us, is not composed in the adorned style of other histories, but in a manner peculiar to themselves. The miraculous facts are related in the same brief, circumstantial, and inartificial manner,

as the ordinary ones. An impression is left on the mind by a perusal of these narratives, that the authors did not write under the influence of imagination, but of the vivid recollection of obvious, though astonishing, facts; and that they had felt a conviction of the reality of what they saw, which nothing could impair or destroy. In very many instances they mention such particulars, as render it impossible to conceive but that the facts, which they so particularly and graphically describe, took place just in the manner in which they relate them. And each Evangelist, in other instances, makes such omissions of many particulars, and such transitions from one incident to another, as would be wholly inexplicable, except upon the supposition that the writer's mind was more occupied with the remembrance of circumstances which he had actually observed, than with the construction and arrangement of a fictitious narrative.

Another circumstance tends to shew, that the Evangelists did not invent the miracles which they record. They are not mere acts of power, exhibited with pomp and ostentation, so as merely to dazzle and astonish the multitude; nor are they characterized by moroseness, superstition, or revenge. Yet such have those been, which have either been put in competition with the Gospel miracles, or which some have attempted to add to

them. Why have men of far superior education succeeded so ill in comparison with the Evangelists, but that the former related what were either fictions or impostures, the latter real facts? Nor are the miracles of Jesus isolated facts, referred to no good or declared end, but expressly wrought for the promotion of the greatest of purposes; connected with important incidents and discourses, so as to add force, and dignity, and authority, to the instructions, at the same time that they also serve to illustrate them. Even when they are most public, there is no appearance of ostentation, but every feature of sobriety, dignity, and decorum; and often were they accompanied by a remarkable humility and concealment of himself. They were works of compassion and benevolence; beneficial in their immediate effect, as well as with reference to their ultimate purpose.

Such was the general character of the works which Jesus did; and a more particular notice of their nature and circumstances shews them to be so decisively *miraculous*, as to present a very strong case even to those, who argue for the antecedent improbability or impossibility of miracles. As it is undeniable that some such works were done, we ask of the sceptic only a candid investigation of the facts of the case; because we believe that this will be of itself sufficient to induce him to assent to the words of Jesus; “the same works

that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Jesus addressed those, who were familiar with the facts in question; and *we* must, in like manner, make ourselves acquainted with them, before we can come to any just decision respecting their competency to assure us of the truth of the Gospel. The facts *may* be so circumstanced, as to be wholly inexplicable on any other supposition, than that the Author of nature is the Author of these extraordinary phenomena. It is ours to ascertain how far that is the case; and our Lord proceeded during his ministry in a manner which offers to our consideration a great variety of facts. Even before the imprisonment of John, at which time he may properly be said to have commenced his preaching, he began his miraculous works; thus exhibiting his credentials before he delivered his message. And this procedure may be observed, not only in the general plan of his ministry, but in the particular portions of it. He generally taught *after* the exhibition of his mighty works. Some of his more important discourses were immediately preceded and occasioned by them. And the most full and particular statements, which he delivered, were at the close of his life, when he may be said to have at length suspended the exercise of his power. In every point of view, therefore, it is necessary to ascertain the real state of the question with

respect to the *nature* of the facts, that we may decide whether they are, or are not, *miraculous*. And if we find ourselves obliged to admit that they are so, it is an admission of a fact in the history of the world, which may justly make us conclude, that all reasonings in denial of the possibility of miracles, are futile and erroneous; and if they are so, surely we may also admit the obvious inference, that God has spoken by Jesus; and we should receive, with humble and adoring faith, the testimony which he has given us respecting that “eternal life, which is in his Son.”

Consider then, still more particularly, the *obvious* nature of these facts. They were of such a nature, as to be subject both to the senses and understandings of all. If they were so, those, who were the subjects and spectators of the miracles, had complete evidence of their reality; and the only evidence which could apply. The greater number of these miracles consisted in the cure of the diseased; the blind, the lame, and the maimed. Their previous infirmity was notorious; in many instances it had been of long duration, and had baffled the skill of physicians. Their recovery was equally ascertainable, and was found, in all cases alike, to be complete and lasting. The change from the one state to the other was, in most instances, effected, or, at least, preceded, by

a word, by the touch, by some external application, whose very nature shewed that it was not the powerful agent which of itself produced the change. That it could be neither the result of imposture, nor the effect of imagination, the number of the instances is sufficient to prove. If imagination could be supposed to cure diseases of every kind, under every circumstance, and of every duration, it could not raise the dead. Much less could any such causes suspend the operation of gravity upon the body of Jesus, and that of St. Peter, and cause “the winds and the sea to obey him.” That no ordinary physical cause could have produced any of these effects, is obvious to common sense, and not deniable by philosophy. There are only two tenable suppositions; and, as far as the argument is concerned, it is indifferent which we select. Either it was a suspension, modification, or counteraction, of the ordinary laws of nature, by the *immediate* operation of divine power; or it was a deviation, for which the Creator had *provided*, in the *original* formation and arrangement of the world; which took place exactly in that age, and at that moment, when one, claiming to be a divine messenger, accompanied these, even on this hypothesis, *extraordinary* occurrences, by such visible signs, as to connect them with his own teaching, and with the other proofs which he gave of his divine

commission^a. On either of these suppositions the proof of divine attestation is equally cogent.

The proof itself, and the sufficiency of its premises, are also rendered more evident by the *greatness, number, and variety*, of these miracles. Impostors seldom venture on many attempts to perform such wonders, as excite astonishment, and provoke inquiry. But in this case the inveteracy of the disorder, and the reality of death, were not more certain, than the speedy, and even instantaneous recovery of health and of life. To what, then, but to a supernatural power, can we ascribe that perfect and permanent efficacy of apparently inadequate means, which neither the strictest scrutiny, nor the lapse of time, could ever disprove? Yet the number of such miracles is very considerable. Upwards of fifty distinct instances are related in detail; besides many references of the Evangelists to others, of which they have given only a general notice. Now a *number* of the same kind certainly adds to the probability of each; but much more a number of *various* kinds. One or two might be the effect of chance; but, as the number and variety of regular phenomena prove the existence of one designing cause, so do the number and variety of our Lord's mira-

^a See the latter hypothesis ably supported by M. Bonnet. *Recherches de Christianisme*, Chap. vi.

cles tend still more and more to shew the certainty of the position, which they were wrought to prove, that he spoke the words of God. And the variety of *manner* in which he performed them, tends still more strongly to establish the same conclusion. For we find that even the same diseases are sometimes cured by one external application, and sometimes by another; sometimes only by a word, sometimes even when the sufferer is in a distant place; as if to shew us that it was not by any charm, any more than by chance, but by the power of God, that the effect was produced.

Consider further the *publicity* of the miracles. They were not wrought, like the pretended ones of ancient or modern times, in private, or under circumstances which might evade scrutiny, or render it inapplicable; but openly, in the face of day, before assembled multitudes of friends and foes; on the highway, in the house, in the synagogue, and in the temple; wherever an unfortunate sufferer presented himself, or application was made on his behalf. When the actual *performance* of the cure was more private, its reality and permanence was equally ascertainable. It was obvious to all who had known the previous condition of those who had received it; and they themselves, even when Jesus attempted to restrain them, published abroad the miracle which had been

wrought, and that Jesus was he, who had made them whole. To this frequency and publicity of the miracles of Jesus is to be attributed that full persuasion, which all applicants evinced, of his ability to grant their request. For such confidence could result only from their knowledge of his previous miracles. To the same cause must we also ascribe the remarks made by the astonished multitude, that he had "done all things well;" and that "it was never so seen in Israel." Hence also they asked, "whether when Christ came, he would do more miracles than Jesus." Hence also their disposition, on some occasions, even forcibly to urge him to assume a temporal kingdom; and on others, their confident expectation that he would do so of his own accord. But, at all such conjunctures, Jesus shewed in another way his superhuman qualities. He was always *aware* of their designs and wishes; and displayed his knowledge of them by his words and by his actions. Nay, during the whole course of his ministry, in various ways, and on numerous occasions, he manifested this his intimate knowledge of the spiritual as well as of the material world; and, as he saw fit, employed either the one or the other to evince his divine authority.

The publicity and reality of the miracles of Jesus are *attested* even by his *enemies*. For, since they were not themselves convinced by them, they deemed it necessary to diminish, if

possible, their influence on the people. They therefore circulated cavils against them; but of such a nature, as implied no doubt of their reality. Once, indeed, they ventured to scrutinize one of the miracles of Jesus; but they were unable in any degree to disprove it. They could only conceal their inability to deny the fact, by objecting to the character of Jesus. "Give God the praise," said they to the blind man, to whom Jesus had restored his sight; "we know that this man is a sinner, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day." But all their opposition and misrepresentations were insufficient to check the prepossessions of the people in his favour; and therefore, as they were not disposed to abandon their own disbelief, they found it necessary to have recourse to violence. This resolution they made, not because Jesus had given no proof of his mission, but because he had proved it so abundantly. "This man, said they, doeth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him."

And why should not all men believe on him? For the method which was taken by his enemies to arrest the progress of his doctrine, does not invalidate, but supports and confirms, the argument, that "the works which he did bore witness of him, that the Father had sent him." They confessed that miracles were done; and how can we conceive them to have been done without divine

assistance? Why was Jesus divinely assisted, if not also divinely commissioned; and if “the works which he did, were not those, which the Father had given him to finish?” His works were wrought to prove the divine authority of what he taught, and the divine appointment of what he did and suffered. The proof is sufficient for the conviction of mankind, if these works were so wrought. And that they were, we have evidence various in its kind, satisfactory in its nature, and infallible in its consequence. There may have been many unfounded reports of miraculous works; many instances, in which knavery has contrived the semblance of a miracle, and in which credulity has too readily admitted such pretences. But an examination of the Gospel miracles soon evinces their decided superiority over the boasted wonders of heathenism, superstition, and imposture. They were wrought not among friends, but in the midst of enemies; not in support of an established religion, but as the foundation of a new one; in furtherance of a religion, not which favoured the prejudices of mankind, but which ran entirely counter to them. They were wrought by the author of that religion among those to whom miracles were not unknown; who demanded them of him in proof of his mission; who well understood the force and nature of the evidence which they afforded; who

were qualified to judge of their reality ; and who, because of his humble and unambitious life, were not afraid to scrutinize them.

Jesus came in humility. But these his mighty works abundantly compensated for this want of the trappings of outward dignity. We recognize in him such wisdom, benevolence, and dignified condescension, as powerfully bespeak our veneration. He claimed to be the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world ; and by his works we believe him so to be ; for if we deny the veracity of the Messenger, we insult the authority of him who sent him. Other than sent of God, Jesus could not be. The peculiar authority with which he both spoke his doctrines, and also commanded the unclean spirits, the winds and the waves, the diseases of the living and the spirits of the dead, might, indeed, have seemed to argue a confidence little suited to one “in the likeness of man,” had they not invariably obeyed him, and proved him more than man. For we see exhibited in the splendour of his miracles, all the dignity of the Messiah, all the glory of the Divinity ; a dignity and a glory, in comparison of which all the splendour of earthly kingdoms is poor and fading. The one is the glory of man ; the other the glory, the wisdom, and the power, of God. Yet the Jews were so prejudiced against the *doctrines* of Jesus, which exposed their de-

pravity, and taught them a purity after which they hated to be reformed, that his *miracles* scarcely restrained them from ridding themselves of his reproofs. But by these miracles we may see demonstrated the divinity of his doctrine. Whether it attacks our vices, abases our pride, reveals our ignorance, or calls us in repentance, humility, and self-abasement, to submit to the righteousness of God, we reject it at our peril.

“I have greater witness than that of John,” said our Lord in the text, when alluding to his works. He elsewhere connected the witness of John with the witness of his own works, in a manner which presents to us a striking coincidence in the train of thought, and which may, perhaps, appeal to our *hearts* more effectually than even the most convincing reasonings.—When Jesus had concluded that address to the multitudes, in which, after the departure of John’s disciples, he instructed them respecting the character and office of John, and how “wisdom would be justified of her children,” both with respect to John and himself; he then began, by a transition similar to that in the text, “to upbraid the cities in which most of his *mighty works* were done, because they repented not^a.” “Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works

^a See Matt. xi. 20—30.

which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes; Sodom would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for you." If so, how shall it fare with some of us in that day; whose prejudices are less inveterate, and yet, perhaps, also less excusable, than those of the Jew; who with the judgment and understanding believe in Jesus, and yet have not repented; it may be are still wedded to our sins, and have resolved to delay repentance. "Repent, and believe the Gospel," were the first words which Jesus delivered in the cities of Galilee, where his mighty works had been done, and where they continued to be done, in confirmation of his authority. We may know, then, that if our's is not that "godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation," if we do not with the heart believe unto righteousness, then,—whether the seed be taken out of our hearts by the father of the lies of infidelity, or whether in time of temptation we fall away, or whether the seed be choked by the cares of this world, or the deceitfulness of riches,—it shall be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for us. For "God is no respecter of persons," and "his judgment is according to truth."

If such be the condemnation to which we are liable, how ought we to be stirred up to strict and serious self-examination, when we hear our Lord address the Father, who had sent him, in words like these ; “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Now if there be sins, errors, and delusions, of the understanding ; if there be “ a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end of which is death ;” if we “ cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we be converted, and become as little children,” in all docility, humility, innocence, and sincerity ; let us then pray, that “ the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by the operation of his holy Spirit,” and that, “ as new-born babes, we may desire the sincere milk of his word that we may grow thereby.” If such be our desire of divine instruction, and such our fitness to receive it, then shall we duly prize, and study, and obey those holy Scriptures, which, through faith in Christ Jesus, can make us wise unto salvation. Then will our faith and hope be strengthened, and our religious inquiries be directed, by our Lord’s next words : “ All things are delivered unto me of my Father ; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any

man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." We may partake of so divine a benefit, as to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent," if we are truly disciples of Jesus. He was sent by the Father to be our teacher and our Saviour; and he is as condescending and gracious, as he is powerful and glorious.

This alarming, yet affectionate, discourse is concluded with words, which always appear to me to exemplify that consummate wisdom, that divine charm, by which our Lord's instructions delight the ear, captivate the affections, and impress the conscience; which must even penetrate and warm the heart of the unbeliever; and which 'have a beauty and pathos in them, which although the Christian feels, the commentator cannot express^a.' Compare with the words last cited those which we are about to cite; their meaning will then be obvious, and may God impress them on our hearts! "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

^a These are the words of Bishop Horne in his Commentary on Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. But they are as applicable to these words of our Saviour, as to those beautiful words of the Psalmist.

LECTURE IX.

OUR LORD'S APPEAL TO HIS MIRACLES IN PROOF OF
HIS MESSIAHSHIP.

St. MATTHEW XI. 2—6.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see; The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

THIS message of the Baptist to Jesus is an incident of so remarkable a character, that probably few attentive Christians peruse the account of it, without a wish to be satisfied respecting the occasion and the object of it. A reference to the Commentators will certainly make the inquirer acquainted with several different opinions on the subject; some of which rest upon mere conjecture and gratuitous assumption; and others do not in-

clude that extended review of the ministry of the Baptist, which is so necessary in order to the right apprehension both of this and of many other questions. Such opinions, however, we shall not notice in a way of formal refutation, but only so far as may be necessary to clear our path in that inquiry, which will in the first instance occupy our attention, viz. how the question respecting the character and office of Jesus was situated, at the time when the Baptist sent this message to him. And as our Lord, in his answer, appeals to his works in support of a claim to somewhat more than merely a divine mission ; it will be our endeavour in the latter part of this Lecture to shew the nature and justice of that appeal.

I. In order to ascertain the occasion, and intention of the Baptist's message, which we are first to consider, we must have recourse to the Evangelical records ; which afford sufficient, and the only legitimate, materials for our purpose.—When the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus, his own public labours had for some time ceased ; for he had been shut up in prison by Herod the tetrarch of Galilee. But, ever after that event, Jesus had gone about the cities of Galilee, proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. After some time he selected twelve

of his disciples to be his constant attendants; giving them the title of Apostles, with reference to their future mission round Galilee in his life time, and to all nations after his death. He still continued to exercise his miraculous powers, in healing the diseased; and, at length, he raised to life the only son of a widow, whom she, attended by much people of the city of Nain, was carrying out for burial as Jesus was entering the city. A great impression was produced by this signal miracle. "There came a great fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things^a." This statement of St. Luke, that they "told him concerning all these things," leaves us no room to doubt that they gave him a full account of all the proceedings of Jesus. He might with reason rely on the correctness of their report; and the subject was one of such interest to him, that he would as little want the disposition, as he did the time and opportunity, to hear all that they could tell him respecting the doctrine and miracles of Jesus. That Jesus had not yet stated himself to be the

^a Luke vii. 11—18.

Messiah, it is scarcely necessary to remark. And, therefore, as far as that fact is considered in connexion with the conduct of the Baptist, a reason appears why, when, upon hearing all these things, John sent two of his disciples to Jesus, the *question* propounded by them was, “ Art thou *he that should come*, or do we look for another ?”

But again, we know that a person named Jesus had formerly come from Galilee to John, to be baptized of him. John then bore to him a remarkable testimony ; stating that he was the very person of whom he had before spoken in several predictions ; and applying to him not only the attributes which he had previously specified, but also several others still more exalted. And before he separated from Jesus, to meet him no more, he directed several of his own disciples to him. They were afterwards numbered with the twelve Apostles ; whom Jesus had selected from the body of his disciples previously to the question proposed by John. That question affords not the slightest indication that he supposed the Jesus, who was now so celebrated in Galilee, to be a person different from him whom he had baptized in Judea, and who had come from Galilee for that purpose. His own disciples could have satisfied him on that point ; for at an earlier period, after John had retired into Galilee, they came to him, and said, “ Rabbi, *he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to*

whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him^a.” It was no long time afterwards that John was imprisoned; and Jesus, who had become so well known in Judea, and whose miracles the *Galileans* also had seen at the feast of the passover, himself went into Galilee; taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all, and increased continually in notoriety and popularity even till the time that John sent to him the message by his disciples. It is also certain that no others but John and Jesus had appeared as divine teachers, and with a belief on the part of the people of their prophetic character; and certainly that no other than Jesus had wrought miracles. And he, having wrought his first miracle at Cana in Galilee, shortly after his baptism, afterwards wrought others in Judea; and then, upon beginning his stated ministry in Galilee, wrought them uninterruptedly up to the period when he raised the widow’s son, and the incident now under consideration occurred.

So far then all is sufficiently obvious. John the Baptist, when he sent to ask of Jesus, whether he was “he that should come,” could not but have been assured, that he, to whom he had borne witness beyond Jordan, was the very person, the

^a John iii. 26.

miraculous attestation to whose divine mission was now so decided and notorious. In this the supposed difficulty consists. Why, it is asked, should he, who had so long known that Jesus was the Messiah; now give reason to suppose that he doubted it? Why should he who had pointed him out as the Messiah to others, now ask to be satisfied upon that point himself?—I am ready to allow that John might *believe* Jesus to be the Messiah; for so were many of the people disposed to believe, who had not been favoured with the divine intimations which he had received. He expressly taught both the messengers of the Sanhedrim, and his own disciples, that he himself was “not the Christ,” but that he was “sent before him^a.” Some of his own disciples he introduced to Jesus, stating that he was “the Son of God,” “the same who would baptize with the Holy Ghost,” and “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” They indeed made the *inference* for themselves, and it was doubtless a just one, that they had “found the Messiah^b.” But we are not authorized from hence to conclude that John had *expressly taught* them this; for we do not find it upon record that he *ever* did, nor have we any reason to believe that he was *commissioned* to do so. It is, however, this gratuitous

^a John i. 20. iii. 28.

^b Ibid. i. 41, 45.

hypothesis, which has brought an appearance of difficulty upon the question before us, which has subjected the Baptist to the imputation of inconsistency, and which, in a great measure, has prevented a right apprehension of the real state of the case. But we confidently deny that we have any authority, from the Evangelical records, to say that John ever ascribed to Jesus the title of the Messiah. It was, in fact, as expedient that John should not make such a declaration, as that Jesus himself should avoid it. And we know that Jesus did not, among the Jews, *publicly* avow his Messiahship in express terms, except when he solemnly declared it to the Sanhedrim at the *close* of his ministry ; but only to the Samaritans, for reasons explained above, and to the Apostles in private after their own confession of his Messiahship. — This circumstance should never be forgotten in the perusal of the Gospels.

Having now disposed of those visionary hypotheses, which serve only to perplex the question, it will only be needful briefly to recal to your minds some of the statements of the Evangelists, respecting the proceedings of the Baptist and of Jesus, in order that the object of John's message may be fully seen.

John proclaimed that “ the kingdom of heaven was at hand ;” and stated that his was “ the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the

way of the Lord." He spoke of one to "come after him;" adding, that himself "came baptizing with water, in order that *he* might be made manifest to Israel." But, as he denied that himself was either the Christ, or Elias, or that prophet, so neither did he state which of these characters belonged to his successor. Yet he specified many definite parts of his character, office, and proceedings; and one especially, which was speedily verified in Jesus, that his successor would be one "mightier than himself," for "John did no miracle." When the jealousy of his disciples was excited by the growing popularity of Jesus, as if they had wholly misunderstood his own frequent reference to one who was to surpass him, he reminded them that he had told them that "he was not the Christ, but was sent before him." And though he was not commissioned to declare to them that Jesus was *the Christ*, he very solemnly inculcated upon them the necessity of receiving his testimony; and while he stated that his joy was fulfilled by the intelligence which they brought, he also declared to them, "He must increase, but I must decrease." It would be superfluous to dilate upon the circumstances which fully accomplished this prediction; for you know how John's public ministry was entirely terminated by his imprisonment, while that of Jesus still proceeded with uninterrupted success. We

observe, however, more than once, besides on the occasion of the message to Jesus, that several are distinguished both by name, and by their proceedings, as still remaining peculiarly the disciples of John. Nor did circumstances allow that he, to whom they remained so much attached, should, even then, explicitly declare to them that Jesus was the Messiah. As he himself told them, “a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from above.” He knew that such a declaration would be beyond *his commission* from above. But, after the miracle at Nain, and all the others of which he had heard in the prison, he judged it expedient to send two of his disciples to put the question to Jesus himself. He thus indicated to them his own expectations; and though he could not himself venture to declare the fact, if indeed he were yet fully acquainted with it, yet he might suppose that he,—of whom he had declared that “he came from heaven, and was above all, that to him the Spirit was given without measure, and that the Father, loving him as the Son, had given all things into his hand,”—might see fit, at that period, to give an explicit answer to the question, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”

I have said that John might *at that period* have indulged such a supposition. That he supposed some such thing, the proposing of the question at

all sufficiently shews. But I have not said, without reason, that at that particular period he conceived such a notion. There is a peculiarity in the phraseology of St. Matthew in our text, which seems distinctly to inform us of this, and to confirm all that we have already advanced with respect to the Baptist's views and proceedings. In the verse preceding our text, he says, "When *Jesus* had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence, to teach and to preach in their cities." But he does not go on to say, "When John had heard in the prison the words of Jesus," but, "when John had heard in the prison the works of *the Christ* (τοῦ Χριστοῦ), he sent two of his disciples." Now it is very true, that in some of the later books of the New Testament, we find the official title *Christ*, and the proper name *Jesus*, applied to our Lord, as perhaps convertible terms. But if that be the case in this passage, it is the only instance in the Gospels, and, I think I may say, in the historical books of the New Testament, where it is so used in the ordinary *narrative*. There is, I believe, no other instance where it does not occur as a title of the *office* which we ascribe to Jesus, and not as the *proper name* of him as an individual. And this consideration will, I think, dispose us to think, that neither is this passage a solitary exception; that St. Matthew meant by using that term in our text, to say some-

thing more, than is usually understood by the passage; more, in short, than if he had merely stated, that "John had heard in the prison the works of Jesus." I conceive that he meant to say, that when John had been told of all these things by his disciples, he perceived that he had received intelligence of the performance of the works of the Messiah, of those ascribed to him by the prophets. And, therefore, after Jesus had exhibited such indication of his Messiahship, he might suppose the period arrived, when he could properly send his disciples to ask of him "whether he was he that should come." And though the reasons, because of which Jesus had hitherto declined an explicit avowal, still existed, and therefore he did not give a direct answer; yet, as we shall soon see, his answer was such as would fully confirm the expectations of the Baptist. Whether his ideas of the character of Jesus were previously so full and definite, we have no data to determine; but we may at least venture to conclude, that he, who like Simeon, had waited for and announced the consolation of Israel, did not see death, until he both had seen, and recognized, the Lord's Christ, respecting whom it had before been revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and that "whosoever believeth in him, the Son of God, hath everlasting life."

It will be expedient to notice somewhat more particularly the *question* itself, which John's disciples proposed, in compliance with their master's direction.—“Art thou *he that should come*, or do we look for *another*?” This evidently implies a supposition either that Jesus was the Messiah, or that the Messiah was to succeed him. It is well known, that in consequence of the passage of the prophet Malachi, which spoke of the Messiah's forerunner under the title of Elijah, the Jews expected Elijah to return in person, and inaugurate the Messiah. John had disavowed all claim to the character of Elijah in that respect. But we find that our Lord's disciples, after his transfiguration, proposed to him a question respecting the opinion of the Scribes, “that Elias must first come.” And previously to that time, when our Lord asked of his disciples, what were the prevalent opinions respecting himself, they mentioned, that “some said that he was Elias.” It is far from improbable, that, although the question of the Baptist was occasioned by the report of works characteristic of the Messiah, it was supposed by him, or at least by his disciples, that they *might* indicate Jesus to be Elijah. For the more immediate occasion of the message was the raising of the young man of Nain from the dead; and that was a work which Elijah had wrought, as recorded in the Old Testament. The state of things at that time, therefore, appeared to

justify the conclusion, either that Jesus was actually the Messiah; or that he was Elijah, and that they must still expect another as the Messiah. Our Lord gave an answer obviously designed to strengthen the opinion that he was *he that should come*; but he left it to John to inform them more fully what were the works characteristic of the Messiah, and how the prophecies were fulfilled in him. He himself, after high encomiums upon the Baptist, taught the multitudes that he was “the Messenger, who was to be sent before the face of the Lord, to prepare his way;” and he also instructed them to consider him as “that *Elias which was for to come*^a.” And we know how he afterwards declared to his disciples that “Elias had already come, and that they had done to him what they listed;” so as to make them “understand that he spake to them of John the Baptist^b.” And if John were the Elias, then Jesus was the Messiah, of the Prophets.

It now remains that we notice the *answer*, which Jesus returned, to a question proposed under the circumstances, and with the views, which we have now, at some length, endeavoured to explain.

The disciples of John arrived at a time, when several opportunities offered themselves to our

^a Matt. xi. 14.

^b Matt. xvii. 10—13.

Lord for the exercise of his miraculous powers. "In that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight^a." They had seen and heard of his former mighty works, and they beheld him still equally ready and able to continue them. "Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached; and blessed is he, who-soever shall not be offended in me."

This answer consists of three parts; first a statement respecting his *miracles*, next respecting his *teaching*, and lastly a *caution* against being *offended in him*. And the question being, "whether he was he that should come," since it was only from the prophets that they could learn that any Messiah might justly be expected to come, and by what characters he might be known when he did come, we may rightly be prepared to suppose, that an appeal is herein made to the prophecies. Yet it is not actually so stated. It appears, at first sight, to be merely a statement of present and obvious facts; and unless the reality of those facts were undeniable, no inference whatever

^a Luke vii. 21.

could be drawn from it. But the language which our Lord uses is almost literally a citation of well known prophecies ; and that he should be able *in such a manner* to describe what John's disciples had both aforetime, and in that very same hour, seen and heard, could not but strikingly convince them that the prophets had spoken of what was now before them, and that he who thus wrought, and thus taught, was "he that should come, and that they needed not to look for another."

The Baptist was himself described by the prophet Isaiah ; and certain words in the fortieth chapter of that prophet, he had applied to himself^b. In the same chapter, the prophet adds, "Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God. Behold the Lord God shall come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him ; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him^c." The Baptist had seen, and had borne record that Jesus was *the Son of God* ; and stated that, "coming after him, he was *mightier* than he." That attribute was now verified by his miracles. But Isaiah had been still more particular on that subject. "Behold your God shall come with vengeance, even God with a recompence ; he will come and save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall

^b Isai. xl. 3—5. John i. 23.

^c Isai. xl. 9, 10.

be unstopped ; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing^a.” And again, “He will swallow up death in victory^b.” And again, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise^c.” Many passages occur to the same effect. The works to which they refer had been already performed by Jesus before the disciples of John came to him ; others were performed in their presence, of which we have no *particular* account ; and with unfailing power did Jesus persevere in these divine works. We can examine for ourselves the evidence of their reality.

^a Isai. xxxv. 4—6. Also xlii. 6, 7.

^b Isai. xxv. 8.

^c Isai. xxvi. 19. See also Job xix. 25. Dan. xii. 2, 9—13. Hos. xiii. 14. Gen. iii. 15, 19. It is not, in so many words, predicted by the prophets, that Messiah would raise the dead. For, perhaps, the passages cited above rather refer to the general resurrection, than to the miracles of the Messiah. Yet, as they speak of the consequences which would result from his successful undertaking, which was, in its original design, the redemption of man from mortality as the penalty of sin, by obtaining the pardon, and effecting the abolition of sin ; the raising of the dead, equally, if not more than other miracles, was a proof of his Messiahship, which had, virtually at least, been noticed by the prophets. And our Saviour's statements in John v. 21—29. may be considered as a *comment* on such passages as we have referred to. If “the Son quickeneth whom he will,” and proved his possession of this power, even during his ministry on earth, by causing “the dead to hear his voice, and live,” we need not marvel at this, because “the hour is coming, when *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.”

“The blind receive their sight.” Can we forget the cure which Jesus wrought, in the presence of the multitude, upon the two blind men who sat by the way-side begging; and that *gradual* cure of the blind man near Bethsaida, by which Jesus so fully shewed that every change was by his agency, and at his will. “Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one *born* blind.” Yet this still more signal miracle Jesus performed; and we shall do well to examine the full relation, given by the Evangelist St. John, respecting restoration of sight to the man who was blind from his birth. For this miracle was severely scrutinized by the Jewish council; but, to their confusion, the more they examined, the less were they able to deny either that the man was *born* blind, or that he now *saw*, or that *Jesus* had opened his eyes.—“The lame walked” also at the command of Jesus. Let it be sufficient to instance the cure of the impotent bed-ridden sufferer at the pool of Bethesda; and the paralytic who was let down through the roof, because of the multitude who crowded the doors, but who, at the word of Jesus, was enabled to take up his bed, and walk.—Many “lepers also were cleansed.” And, that the reality of the cure might be legally ascertained and recorded, Jesus commanded them, as the law required, to “go and shew themselves to the priests, as a testimony

against themselves” if they afterwards ventured to deny the cure.—Do we ask whether he also made “the deaf to hear?” Let the confession of the multitude who were eye-witnesses satisfy us. “He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”—The “dead also were raised up.” Not only the widow’s son at Nain, who was *about* to be committed to the *grave*, was restored to life; but the daughter of Jairus, who had *just* expired; and Lazarus also, who had been dead *four days*, upon whom the mouth of the sepulchre had been closed, and the witnesses of whose resurrection were numerous friends of the family who had come from Jerusalem to condole with them. Rightly, therefore, did the people observe, “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man doeth?” They were the very works of the Messiah, and they needed not to look for him in any other than Jesus.

But our Lord, having directed the inquirers to these considerations, added another, which might make the conclusion still more satisfactory. “To the poor the Gospel is preached.” It was not his miraculous power alone, but the *subject of his doctrine*, and the *persons* to whom it was preached, and for whom it was suited, that evinced him to be “he that should come.” The Baptist had himself “seen the Spirit descending upon him, and remaining on him,” and had testified that

“God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.” Both he and his disciples would remember of *whom* it had been declared by the same prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek^a.” If, then, such were the ministry of *Jesus*, they had another circumstance to corroborate that inference, which they might draw from his miracles, in favour of his Messiahship.—But the same prophet had also uttered other predictions, which would equally be fulfilled in their season; though blessed were they only to whom the darker portions of them did not apply. “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation stone a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste^b,” or stumble at that stone. Again, Isaiah says in another place, “He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken^c.”

Blessed is he, said Jesus in conclusion, and alluding to these predictions, “Blessed is he, who-soever shall not be *offended* in me.” Too many of the men of that generation were, however,

^a Isai. lxi. 1.

^b Ibid. xxviii. 16.

^c Ibid. viii. 14, 15.

offended in him ; for he came not in that pomp, and with those offers of temporal ease, and riches, and pre-eminence, which alone were congenial to their carnal and groveling desires. He that should come, was “ meek, lowly, and having salvation ;” but a salvation from sin and condemnation, and which led to pardon, and holiness, and immortality. “ They would not come to him, that they might have life.” Miracles of vengeance, therefore, overtook them, because miracles of mercy failed to convince.

We shall hereafter have occasion to advert to the motives and objections, which made the cross of Christ, and his character, and doctrines, to become, even before his crucifixion, a stumbling-block to the Jews. But we may surely observe at this period of our course, that the miracles which he wrought proved that “ the Father had sent him ;” and that the correspondency of these miracles, as well as of his doctrine, and of the whole of his ministry, to prophetic description, proved him to be the *Messiah*. And, before I conclude, I would notice some other prophecies respecting the Messiah, and compare them with another appeal to his miracles in proof of his Messiahship, which our Lord made upon another occasion, and in a different connexion.

We quoted above, from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, the words in which the prophet speaks of

the “Lord God coming with a strong hand, having his reward with him, and his work before him.” He thus proceeds in the following verse. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Compare with the whole of that passage another in the prophecy of Ezekiel. “Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, even I, will both search out my sheep, and seek them out.—I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; and I will feed them with judgment.—And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it^a.”—Now compare, with these passages, our Lord’s beautiful and well known discourse concerning himself as the good Shepherd, delivered immediately after he had wrought one of the miracles *mentioned in our text*, the healing of the man born blind. That

^a Ezek. xxxiv. 11—24.

discourse, the previous instructions, and the recent miracles of Jesus, caused a division among the Jews; and they therefore came round about him in Solomon's porch, and said unto him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? *If thou be the Christ*, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, referring, as it should seem, to his discourse before the Sanhedrim after the miracle at Bethesda, "I told you, and ye believed not, 'the works that I do in my Father's name they bear witness of me.' But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you^a." He then spoke of his power to save, of his unity with the Father, and of the sanction given by his miracles to his claim of the title "Son of God," as being "he whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world."—It would be easy to shew, from a comparison of the whole of these statements with prophecy, that he here appealed to his works in proof of his Messiahship; and also that he endeavoured to lead them to acknowledge, that his claim to *divinity*, his *doctrines*, and the professed *object* of his mission, all corresponded to the prophetic description of the *Messiah*.

The preaching of a lowly, spiritual, and crucified Messiah, ever was to the Jews a stumbling-block; and to the Greeks it appeared foolishness.

^a John x. 24, &c.

The offence of the cross has not even yet ceased. Some there are, even at this day, who cavil at the evidences of the Gospel. Some are ashamed of the peculiar doctrines of the cross of Christ, in which they should rather glory. And others value not the offer of pardon, aspire not after the holiness to which they are called, and are averse from the practice of self-denial, and the cultivation of humility. But still, "blessed are they whosoever are not offended in Jesus!" And should any one of you ask, who they are that attain this blessedness, and what are the rewards promised for your encouragement, I would answer in the divine words of my Master and your's: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God^b."

We have seen that Jesus, in proof of his authority, gave sight to the blind. From this miracle he also borrowed an illustration to teach us the nature of his mission, and our responsibility and danger in consequence of it. "For judg-

^b Matt. v. 1—8.


ment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind^a.” “I am come a light into this world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness^b.”—Did he also raise up the dead? He did it that we might “believe that the Father had sent him;” that we might know that he is “the resurrection, and the life; that he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall live, and that whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall not die eternally.” And He still demands of us as he did of Martha, “Believest thou this?” Blessed shall we be, if we can concur with her in the declaration, “Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world^c.” Once more then I repeat by way of caution, “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Jesus!”

^a John ix. 39.^b Ibid. xii. 46.^c Ibid. xi. 25—27.

LECTURE X.



OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE CAVIL WHICH IMPUTED HIS DISPOSSESSION OF DEMONS TO SATANIC AGENCY. HE APPEALS TO THAT CLASS OF HIS MIRACLES AS INDICATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF *THE KINGDOM OF GOD*.



St. LUKE XI. 20.

But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

THESE words form a portion of that discourse, in which our Lord answers the well known cavil of the Pharisees, who more than once ascribed to Satanic co-operation the miracles mentioned in our text. Of no miracles have the Evangelists made more frequent mention, of none have they given a more circumstantial description. They are moreover of so remarkable a character, as to suggest an inquiry into their nature; and as our Lord entered into an argument with a view of evincing the reality of *divine* co-operation in that particular class of miracles, and, having established his position, specified the particular inference to

be drawn from it, the consideration of this subject must not be omitted, in a course of Lectures designed to review and illustrate our Lord's reasonings respecting the evidences of his mission.

Our attention must, in the first place, be directed to the *nature* and *reality* of the miracles in question.—The Evangelists state^a, that there were brought unto Jesus such as were “possessed with devils,” such as were “vexed with unclean spirits;” and that “he healed them,” and “cast out the spirits with a word.” To whatever decision we come as the nature and origin of the affliction described in these terms, of its reality we can entertain no doubt. In some instances the Evangelists have recorded, either in their own words, or in the words of those who requested Jesus to extend his compassion to the sufferers, many of the symptoms of the disorder with which they were affected. They were the visible and pitiable exhibitions of melancholy, furious distraction, and convulsion. That all these ceased at the will and by the word of Jesus is not less evident. “The people were amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he the unclean spirits, and

^a Matt. viii. 16. Luke vi. 18.

they do obey him^b.” “The unclean spirit came out of one, and hurt him not^c ;” “the people found another sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind^d ;” the daughter of the Syrophenician woman “was made whole from the hour,” in which Jesus declared to her that her petition was granted^e. The Pharisees never denied the reality of the cure, though they endeavoured to account for it in such a way as might obviate the inferences which the multitude were disposed to make from it. And the fact itself must have been both notorious and undeniable, which drove them to the necessity of adopting such a procedure.

But still the question remains to be answered, what was the *nature* of the calamity itself, to which these unhappy sufferers had been subjected, and from which they were delivered? We are told by some that all these were cases either of insanity or of epilepsy ; and that they are to be considered as ordinary disorders, resulting from natural causes. Such an opinion makes this class of miracles to differ little, if at all, from the healing of the sick, the lame, and the blind. We have, in that case, a greater variety of instances of the same description of miracle ; and undoubtedly, the reality of the miracle being

^b Mark i. 27.

^c Luke iv. 35.

^d Luke viii. 35.

^e Matt. xv. 28.

undeniable, the same general inference is deducible in favour of the divine mission and Messiahship of Jesus. But it cannot but occur to us, that there is a *peculiarity* in the *inference* drawn in the text from these miracles, which may dispose us to hesitate, at least, in admitting such an opinion ; and to suppose that there may also be a peculiarity in the *miracles* themselves. But of this we shall be better prepared to judge hereafter.

There is, however, another difficulty in admitting that opinion. If the Evangelists had merely, as in other cases, described the *symptoms* of these disorders, the question whether they were at all different from ordinary disorders would never, probably, have been agitated. Did it appear, that those only who applied to Jesus in behalf of their suffering friends, ascribed their disorder to a *demoniacal* possession, and had we been told, at the same time, that such was the general opinion of the Jewish nation in that age, we might at once have granted that the notion was merely a vulgar error. But we naturally pause, when we find that the Evangelists themselves ascribe the disorder to the same cause, in a great variety of form and expression, repeatedly *distinguishing* the demoniacs from other sick and afflicted persons^a. Even this perhaps might not

^a Matt. iv. 24. Mark i. 34. Luke vi. 17, 18.

stagger us, or be inexplicable. But we find that our Lord uses precisely the same language on all occasions. When enumerating his own miracles, and when specifying those which he empowered his disciples to perform, he clearly distinguishes the expulsion of demons from healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and every other species of miraculous cure^b. When we learn from the Gospel narrative how he “cast out the spirits with his word,” we find that he spoke in a manner which was, at least, perfectly consistent with the opinion that those persons who were supposed to be under demoniacal influence, were really so influenced; and also that the conduct of these persons themselves appears from several circumstances to corroborate the same opinion^c. And when our Lord reasons with the Pharisees on this very subject in the text and context, he not only argues with them on their own principles, but he never hints that their notions were erroneous; and both on that occasion, and also when the seventy returned, expressing their “joy that even the demons were subject to them through his name,” the conclusions, and assurances which he brings forward, so far from discountenancing

^b Matt. x. 1, 8; xvii. 21. Mark iii. 15; xvi. 17. Luke ix. 1; x. 17—20; xiii. 32.

^c Matt. viii. 28—32. Mark i. 24, 25; iii. 11, 12. Luke iv. 34—41; viii. 28—32.

the notion of demoniacal possession, appear to justify the opinion that the admission of its reality is of no small importance in order to a right apprehension of the object both of his own mission, and of that of the Apostles^a.—Those who are familiar with the contents of the Gospels will have already called to mind the several passages to which we have alluded, and the citation of which would have made it necessary to dwell much longer on this topic.

Those Christian divines who undertake to shew that “there never was a real demoniac in the world,” are of course prepared to explain the remarkable phraseology employed by our Lord and the Evangelists. They observe that it was the popular language on this subject, and that our Lord adopted it, not with a view of countenancing the notion in which such expressions originated, but because the refutation of such errors in philosophy and nosology was not one of the objects of his mission, and because it was not either necessary or expedient to run counter to the prevailing opinion. Yet since they themselves strenuously contend that this opinion has been the occasion of much fraud and superstition, and that it is little better than a relic of Paganism, we might have

^a Matt. xii. 25 — 29. Mark iii. 23—27. Luke x. 17 — 24 ; xi. 17 — 26.

supposed it expedient that our Lord should not so apparently give countenance to it, even if it were not, in other respects, more than a question of philosophy. If the received opinion be correct, it has an intimate connexion with the important question relative to the power, designs, and agency of our great spiritual “adversary, the Devil.” And if it be true that in our Christian warfare “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood only, but against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places ;” then it behoves us not only to “take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil,” but also to “make ourselves acquainted with his devices,” and fully to inform ourselves how “the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.”

We are told indeed that the possessions in the Gospels, are not, with the sanction of the original, to be termed *diabolical*, but *demoniacal*, and that wherever the plural word “devils” occurs in Scripture, it is in the original “demons.” We allow the truth of this remark. But still the question recurs, whether, or not, the scriptural description of *possessing demons* supports the received opinion. Much learning has been employed to shew, that by the word *demon* is meant “the spirit of a dead mortal,”—that such

only were worshipped as deities by the heathen world,—that such is the use of the word in Scripture,—and that, since the popular opinion referred possession to such agents, we are to understand the possessing demons in the Gospel in the same sense, and not as at all alluding to “the devil and his angels.” This is not the place to enter upon such an inquiry as this question requires^a. Suffice it then to remark, that it is not true that even the heathen writers meant by this term only the spirits of dead men; and the sense in which it is used in the Gospels with respect to possessions, will best be determined from the Scriptures themselves.

It is scarcely necessary to remind you that the arch-apostate, the seducer of our first parents, is called in Scripture by various titles, descriptive of his character, influence, and operations. He is called the wicked one, the tempter, Satan, or the adversary, the prince of this world, the devil^b.

^a This, and most of the other questions connected with this subject, were treated very largely, and the arguments on both sides very fully detailed, in the celebrated controversy between Farmer and Worthington. A luminous and masterly treatise was written at the time by John Fell, entitled, “An Inquiry into the Heathen and Scripture doctrine of Demons; in which the hypotheses of the Rev. Mr. Farmer, and others, on this subject, are particularly considered.”

^b 1 John iii. 12. v. 18. Matt. iv. 3. 1 Thess. iii. 5. Job ii. 6. 1 Pet. v. 8. 2 Cor. iv. 4. &c.

Now if we find some of these titles used by our Lord on other occasions, when not speaking of the subject of demoniacal possession, we can scarcely be at a loss to understand of what description of beings he is *then* speaking. For instance, he three times mentions “the prince of this world^c.” He also speaks of “the devil and his angels^d ;” of “the devil as being a murderer and liar from the beginning^e ;” and of “Satan as desiring to sift St. Peter as wheat^f.” And the Evangelists ascribe the apostacy of Judas by the phrase that “Satan entered into him^g.” Now if we find that the *same terms* are connected with the subject of *demoniacal possession*, it will afford no slight presumption that they are in fact to be referred to the *same agents*. What inference, then, is suggested by the following passage in the tenth chapter of St. Luke? “The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld *Satan* as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of *the enemy*^h ; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that

^c John xii. 31. xiv. 30. xvi. 11.

^d Matt. xxv. 41.

^e John viii. 44.

^f Luke xxii. 31.

^g Luke xxii. 3. John xiii. 2, 27.

^h See Matt. xiii. 39.

the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven^a." Hear also the following words of St. Peter, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, where the word, upon which the antidemoniac system is founded, is not employed. " God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power ; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of *the devil* ; for God was with him^b." Again, when our Lord himself speaks of the woman who is described by St. Luke, as having had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, he says, that "*Satan* had bound her^c." We may remember also, that it was Satan who was permitted to afflict Job with his sore diseases^d ; and that the infliction of bodily disorders for the correction of the incestuous offender at Corinth, was termed by the Apostle, " the delivery of such an one unto Satan^e."—It is sufficiently evident from the passages just cited, in whatever manner they be explained, that the limited power, which according to Scripture, is permitted in some cases over the bodies of mankind, is ascribed to no other than " that same old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world," " who beguiled Eve by his subtilty," and by whose

^a Luke x. 17—20.^b Acts x. 38.^c Luke xiii. 16.^d Job i.^e 1 Cor. v. 5.

influence, as the tempter, our minds may also be "corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ."

But the discourse from whence our text is taken, affords perhaps the most decisive evidence of the propriety with which we may refer demoniacal possessions to the same fallen being. The Pharisees gave no indication that they doubted the reality either of the possession, or of its removal. They were chagrined at the inference which the multitude were disposed to draw from it, and they endeavoured to suggest to them another. "The multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons^a." The god of the neighbouring nation of the Philistines was called by this or a similar name, and thence probably they borrowed it. But the question to be determined is, *whom* they intended to designate by it, and what was the nature of the imputation cast upon our Lord. His answer would not have been pertinent, unless it met them on their own ground, and was conformable to their own ideas. The Evangelist, prefacing the mention of our Lord's answer by a significant declaration, states that "he, *knowing their thoughts*, said

^a Matt. ix. 33, 34.

unto them,—If Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say, that I cast out demons through Beelzebub.” If then the casting out demons through Beelzebub, be in fact synonymous with casting them out through Satan, and if that imply the division of Satan against himself, it must necessarily follow that those who were possessed with demons, were, in the opinion of our Lord, possessed with *Satan* or his associates.

It was observed above, that we cannot doubt the *reality* of the disorders, from which those termed “*Demoniacs*” were delivered, whatever opinion be adopted respecting their *nature*. We have also endeavoured to ascertain the notion which both our Lord and the Evangelists convey to us respecting the real *origin* of these possessions. Both to the believer and to the unbeliever such information is needful, in order to form a correct judgment respecting this class of our Lord’s miracles, and what the sacred writers teach us concerning them. But we must advance still further, and point out some of those circumstances, which *evidence* the reality of these *as demoniacal possessions*; though upon this, and every other, department of this extended subject, we must observe that brevity which our limits require, though the difficulty and importance of the subject would seem scarcely to allow it.

You have doubtless remarked, that the demoniacs manifested a very correct apprehension of the character and office of Jesus; and that he, therefore, “charged the demons to hold their peace, and to come out;” and he “suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was Christ^a.” They accosted him as “the Holy One of God, the Son of God, the Son of God most high, the Christ^b.” These professions, and their fear of him, as “coming to torment them before the time,” though remarkable, are, notwithstanding, explicable upon supposition that these individuals were really under the influence of wicked spiritual beings. But, if these declarations were only the ravings of ordinary madness, we are at a loss to conceive how the subjects of it had derived, at that time, the *distinct* knowledge of the character of Jesus, upon which so positive a testimony must have been grounded. They made it, in several instances, at an early period of his ministry; but both then, and afterwards, the popular opinions respecting Jesus were not so decided either as to what was the character of Jesus, or as to the attributes which might be ascribed to him. The supposition, therefore, that these were merely *insane* persons, who eagerly embraced from

^a Mark i. 25—34. Luke iv. 41.

^b Matt. viii. 29. Mark i. 24; iii. 11. Luke iv. 34, 41, viii. 28.

hearsay, and pertinaciously retained, an opinion that Jesus was the Christ, is insufficient to explain their full testimony respecting him. It is much more probable that we may recognize herein an exemplification of the remark which St. James has applied to the existence and unity of God; "Even the demons believe, and tremble." In one instance, indeed, the proposed hypothesis, even if admitted, is entirely inapplicable. For one of these attestations was given by the demoniac mentioned by St. Luke; whose disorder the anti-demonists themselves rank rather under the head of *epilepsy*, than of insanity. And in narrating the cure of that sufferer, the Evangelist has also used an expression, which is scarcely consistent with the notion, that his disorder was either epilepsy, or madness, of any *ordinary* character; though it is perfectly intelligible to those who admit the reality of possession. "When the demon had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and *hurt him not*^a."

But the migration of the demons, who had possessed the two Gadarenes, into the neighbouring herd of swine, and the catastrophe which followed, are circumstances, which most decisively establish the supernatural character of these afflictions, and which, perhaps, were designed for

^a Luke iv. 33—35.

that purpose. The opinion that this numerous herd was *driven* into the sea by the two demoniacs, is inconsistent with the narrative of the Evangelists. Others, who deny that the two demoniacs were really such, ascribe the madness of the swine to the immediate infliction of God. For what end it does not sufficiently appear. If we adhere to the statement of the Evangelists, it appears that Jesus permitted the demons, *at their own public request*, to go into the swine; and as the swine could not be confederates in any fraud, the madness which ensued, and its consequence, was a full and visible proof of the reality of that demoniacal influence, from which the two men, who, from that time, remained in their right mind, had been delivered^b.

It now only remains that we notice the reasoning by which our Lord proved to the Pharisees, that it was “by the finger of God that he cast out demons;” and also the inference, which he drew from thence, that therefore “the kingdom of God was come upon them.”

Either Jesus cast out demons by his own unaided powers, or by compact with the prince of demons, or by the finger of God. The first

^b Mark v. 1—20. Luke viii. 26—39. Not only the circumstance noticed above, which is *peculiar* to this instance of possession, but almost every other very strongly corroborates the opinion that it was a case of real possession.

supposition the Pharisees ventured not to advance. The only pretext which they could find for a denial of the last position, was to contend for the second, that "by the prince of the demons he cast out demons." Jesus refuted that, and thereby established the true and only remaining supposition. And, in this refutation, he made a tacit appeal to the purity, and excellence of the doctrine, in recommendation of which he wrought his miracles. If it was impossible to suppose that an apostate, wicked, and seducing spirit would lend his aid to establish such a doctrine, then was their insinuation groundless. And, if that insinuation had any force, it could still only prove that Satan was himself, whether wittingly, or unwittingly, subverting his own power and kingdom; so that still the inference would remain, that his power was falling, and the kingdom of God about to be established. For, answered our Lord, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand^a?"

Our Lord next subjoins an argument, the precise bearing of which we cannot, perhaps, accurately determine; though in any sense in which we take it, it is certainly conclusive against the

^a Matt. xii. 25, 26.

Pharisees. "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges." If we suppose our Lord to refer to the miracles of the ancient prophets, we may suppose that he wished them to consider the consequences of their objection; since there was no circumstance attending his own miracles, which would not equally apply to those of the prophets, whom they believed to be divinely assisted. His were even more numerous, signal, and undeniable miracles. But, more probably, Jesus refers to the dispossessions, whether real or pretended ones of the Jewish exorcists; some of whom, as we learn both from the Gospels, and from the Acts of the Apostles, attempted to cast out demons in the name of Jesus^b. But at any rate, the same slander would apply to them as well as to himself; for no reason appeared why their dispossessions should not be ascribed to satanic assistance, if they were correct in so ascribing his. His argument does not necessarily grant that any such miracles were really the consequence of their attempts; and indeed the surprise of the people at these instances of the power of Jesus, shews that they were as *unprecedented*, as they were signal and astonishing; for they openly avowed, that "it was never so seen in Israel." But

^b Mark ix. 38. Acts ix. 14.

waving such a comparison, if they persevered in their cavil, their own children would accuse them of calumniating their power as exorcists, and, if appealed to as umpires in the dispute, would condemn them, and acquit him. The only tenable supposition was, that he “cast out demons by the finger of God,” or, as St. Matthew expresses it, “by the Spirit of God ;” by that divine influence and power, with which he “was anointed to heal all that were brought into subjection by the devil,” and by which he “proclaimed deliverance to the captive, and set at liberty them that were bruised.”

“But,” adds our Lord, “if I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” Let it be here remarked, that he does not say, “No doubt I am *sent of God*,” nor yet, “No doubt I am *he that should come*.” He speaks not so much of the Messiah’s personal office and character, as of the *dispensation* which he was to introduce. Both John and Jesus began their ministry with the proclamation, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand ;” and both the twelve, and also the seventy, disciples were sent out by Jesus, to deliver the same annunciation. And when their message was rejected by the inhabitants of a city, they were commissioned to “shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them,” and to declare,

“Notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Now we find it expressly mentioned that the twelve were, in the first instance, empowered to “cast out demons;” and the seventy, when they returned, joyfully declared to their Master, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us through thy name.” And Jesus took occasion from the remark of the seventy to anticipate the downfall of Satan, and the future triumphs of his own servants. “He said unto them, I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven! Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” And these several considerations, taken in connexion with our text, readily suggest to us, that this particular miracle was peculiarly *appropriate* as an evidence of the introduction of the kingdom of God. Now I know not how far this remark of our Lord may of itself justify us in asserting, that the Jews expected that the Messiah, who of course was to introduce and set up the kingdom of God, would cast out demons. For this is perhaps not definitely and expressly predicted in the prophets. But still as even the apocryphal book of Wisdom states that “through envy of the devil sin entered into the world,” and as the history of the fall could not but be understood of the seduction of some spiritual

but wicked being; and as also the Jews themselves stated in commenting upon the first promise that “a remedy would be applied to the heel of the woman’s seed in the days of king Messiah,” we may conclude that the persons, to whom our Lord addressed the words of the text, had before them such *data* as would enable them to understand the tendency, and to appreciate the cogency, of our Lord’s argument. For even the multitudes felt themselves authorized, after witnessing his cure of a demoniac, to exclaim, “Is not this the Son of David^a?” Nor is it easy to conceive how such an inference was suggested to their minds, except by such considerations as we have noticed. Yet the objection, which the Pharisees circulated in order to check the disposition to adopt that opinion, was not at all directed against the insufficiency of the premises, if admitted, to establish that conclusion. They knew that, if Jesus did “cast out demons by the finger of God,” they could not disprove his claim to be the Son of David, and the heir of his everlasting kingdom. They ventured, therefore, to deny that these miracles were wrought by divine assistance; but their’s was a mere assertion, not supported by any semblance of argument; and our Lord, as we have seen, unanswerably refuted it, by shewing its manifold absurdity.

^a Matt. xii. 23.

In the words following the text, our Lord more fully explained his argument, by means of a suitable, though familiar, illustration. He had refuted the notion, that Satan had been his confederate. On the contrary, there was a trial of strength between them ; and those, who watched the progress of the conflict, would see, that the power of Satan was on the decline, in spite of all his efforts, and in consequence of the onset of one superior in might. “ If I, said our Lord, by the finger of God, cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.—Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace ; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoil^b. ”

Our Lord subjoined, on this occasion, the solemn caution respecting the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and a statement of its unpardonable criminality. That subject will come under our notice in the last department of our Lectures. At present we shall only request your attention to the words which immediately follow those last cited ;

^b Matt. xii. 29. Luke xi. 21, 22. Comp. Isai. xlix. 24—26.

and which may be considered as the application and improvement of all that we have been reviewing.

“He that is not with me, is against me, and he, that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad^a.” If there be such parties, engaged in such a warfare;—if there be a “prince of this world,” a “spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience;” and also “a king, whom the God of heaven and earth would place upon his holy hill of Zion,” and who dwells and reigns in the hearts of those, who are “turned from the power of Satan unto God;”—and if he, who “cometh in the name of the Lord to receive the kingdom of his father David,” be “the stronger one,” as well as the more holy; then, surely, it cannot be a matter of indifference, whether we rank ourselves under the standard of Satan, or of Christ. The Captain of our salvation, who went forth conquering and to conquer, and who calls upon all who value their life, to follow him, hath himself distinctly declared, and divine and undeniable is his authority, that in this warfare there can be no neutrality. He who takes part with the Devil and his angels, will undoubtedly share in their future overthrow and punishment. But whosoever also does not actually espouse the

^a Matt. xii. 30.

cause of Christ, and “fight manfully under his banner,” will in this life be really promoting the interests of Satan’s kingdom, and at the decisive day will be dealt with as having sided with him. He will thus draw down upon himself the penalties, to which Jesus alluded when he said, “As for those mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.”

That such is the meaning of these words of our Lord, is evident from the connexion in which they stand. On another occasion, and in another connexion, he delivered a statement, which, at first sight, appears of a contrary tendency. Yet that also is an instructive declaration ; and before we conclude, we shall cite it in his own words. But the circumstances, under which it was spoken, are so necessary to understand it aright, so striking in themselves, and so illustrative of the subject of this Lecture, that we cannot refrain from briefly adverting to them.

We have seen that our Lord taught his hearers to consider the miracles, which he wrought on the demoniacs, as indications of the approaching establishment of the kingdom of God. The scene which was exhibited to the three favoured disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, was doubtless a signal exhibition of the glory of him, who had come to be “a Prince and a Saviour.” There

was much in that transaction which tended to shew the spiritual nature of his kingdom. But the splendour of it seems to have raised to the utmost the expectations of the disciples; nor were they wrong in supposing, that he was then very shortly about to enter on his glory. Yet they could not comprehend what was then told them, of “the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” On descending from the mountain, retaining, to the amazement of the multitude, a portion of the glory in which he had been arrayed, he found the Scribes disputing with his disciples, who had been unable to cure a demoniac, and probably, therefore, triumphing over them because of the apparent failure of the power of Jesus^a. Jesus, lamenting the infidelity and perverseness of that generation, by a word effected the cure. He also gently reproved his disciples, either because they had attempted the cure prematurely, and without divine suggestion, or because in attempting it, they had distrusted the readiness of God to co-operate in order to its success; yet, at the same time, he spoke of the future efficacy of that miraculous faith, which they would afterwards so signally exercise. But both they and the multitudes were deeply impressed by the miracle. “They were all amazed at the mighty power of God.” Pro-

^a See Matt. xvii. Mark ix. Luke ix.

bably even the people in general were more than ever disposed to “think that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” And the scene on the mountain on the preceding day had very much strengthened such expectations in the minds of some of his disciples. But he took occasion to rectify their apprehensions with regard to the future transactions and real nature of that kingdom of God, the approaching establishment of which had again been evidenced by the recent miracle. “While they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.” They understood him not, and they feared to ask an explanation. Yet so fully occupied were their minds with anticipations respecting “the dominion, and glory, and kingdom, which were to be given to the Son of man,” that they “debated among themselves which of them should be the greatest” in those days of approaching exaltation. When Jesus inculcated humility, as the qualification of those who would either be great in the kingdom of heaven, or could even enter therein, one of those disciples, who had desired that he and his brother should “sit on his right hand and on his left in his kingdom,” made a remarkable protestation of his zeal in his Master’s cause. “Master, said he, we saw

one *casting out devils in thy name*; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.” This drew from our Lord many remarks, both immediately in answer to the statement of John, and also of general concern. We have time only to notice that, which is more immediately connected with our present subject, and which we proposed to compare with the observation that occurs in the discourse from whence our text is taken. “Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For *he that is not against us is on our part*. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward.”

Our Lord’s remarks, on this occasion also, are sufficiently explained by the circumstances to which they refer. When he observed, that “whosoever was not with him was against him,” he was addressing those, who not only did not actually join the company of his constant followers, who not only had need that he should help their imperfect belief, but who actually disbelieved, and maliciously cavilled against that which was sufficient for their conviction. They persevered in blaspheming the Son of man; and he judged it necessary to caution them respecting the danger of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. But he,

whom John had ventured to forbid, had even such a favourable opinion of Jesus, as openly to shew a respect for him, by “ casting out demons *in his name* ;” and, for ought John knew, might be a decided believer. But such a one would at least not be disposed, even from inconsiderateness, much less in malice, to speak evil of the Son of man ; but rather would he be inclined to believe that “ the kingdom of God had come,” and that Jesus was the Christ. And if every kindness done even to themselves, in the name of their Master, and because they were *Christ’s*, would not lose its reward, it was both unnecessary, and inexpedient, to forbid such a one to shew his confidence in the power, and his respect for the character of their Master, even though he did not follow him with them. It would therefore become them to regulate their own *behaviour to others* by the maxim, that “ he is on their part, who is not against them ;” and to leave it to every one’s conscience to consider for himself that *individual responsibility* which was declared in the words, “ He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.”

“ To our own Master we stand, or fall.” From his omniscience neither our external conduct, nor our secret principles, can be concealed. A day will come “ when God will make up his jewels, and spare them that have feared him, and that have

thought on his name ; when we shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." That Jesus, whose authority we have been maintaining, the object of whose kingdom we have been explaining by his own words and works, and who will hereafter appear as our Judge, has himself declared, " Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have *cast out devils* ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Now if even a participation of the miraculous powers and gifts of the primitive ages was not, of itself, a decisive proof that men were truly Christ's, so as to be " confessed by him when he shall come in the glory of his Father," what jealousy should we, of these latter days, exercise over ourselves ! We have seen that he came to establish the kingdom of God upon the ruins of that of Satan. We have seen that in this warfare none can be neuter. We know that the kingdom of God is " righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ;" and that those " are of their father the devil, who do the lusts of their father." If then you would rightly judge of your own situation in this matter ; if you desire to ascertain whether you have been " delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the


kingdom of God's dear Son," you perceive the sufficient, and the only, test which you are to apply. It is also fully explained in the words of the beloved Apostle. "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother^a."

But at the same time that our subject calls upon us to warn and to direct you, it also enables us to console and to encourage you. The kingdom of God has been established, and it will never be destroyed. But it was established by the Son of man, who came "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He "gave his own life a ransom for many," "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them, who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage." We may, therefore, be assured, that God hath made us "more than conquerors, through him that loved us;" that Jesus has "spoiled principalities and


^a 1 John iii. 7—10.

powers, triumphing over them in his cross ;” and that “ Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly.”


It is, indeed, through the revelation of the Gospel, that the temptations, the subtilty, and the devices of the prince of darkness have been so distinctly made known to us. By the attack which he made on our Saviour at the commencement of his ministry, and by the exhibition, during our Lord’s ministry, we may almost say, of his visible and sensible influence over the bodies and souls of men, we have been fully assured of his existence, and power, and malignity. Yet are we not left in despair. For he, who has given us the opportunity to learn these things, has also given us assurance of his own superiority ; has conquered in our behalf ; has assured us that “ greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world ;” has declared to us the Father, and poured out the gifts of the Spirit ; and has thus furnished us with that divine panoply, clad in which we may “ withstand in every evil day, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”



LECTURE XI.



OUR LORD'S APPEAL TO THE WITNESS OF THE
FATHER, BY WHICH HE WAS THE *SUBJECT*, AS
WELL AS THE WORKER, OF *MIRACLES*.



St. JOHN V. 37, 38.

And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you ; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

THIS passage is certainly involved in considerable difficulty. If we refer to the original itself, we find that although, in some respects, its purport might be more distinctly expressed, it requires the assistance of the Commentator, rather than the amendments of the Translator. For the difficulty principally consists, not in the ambiguity of particular words, but in that apparent want of connexion between the different clauses, which has probably been occasioned by the conciseness of the passage. As far, however, as these words of our Lord will be employed in suggesting topics

for our present consideration, we shall proceed on the most evident and certain grounds. Nor am I without a hope, that we shall be able to illustrate the scope of the whole passage, by comparing the first clause of it with those that precede and follow it. For such a comparison shews, that we cannot, as many have done, identify its subject with that which is treated either in the former, or in the subsequent verses; since by such a supposition we both neglect the most obvious meaning of the passage, and impair the order and completeness of this very methodical discourse of our Lord.

“The same *works*, that I do,” argued our Lord, “bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” He then adds, “And the Father, which hath sent me, *himself* hath borne witness of me.” The first of these appeals we have considered in a former Lecture; the latter is the subject of our present Lecture. And I have retained the exact *order* of the words of the original in reciting the latter clause; because it thus very obviously appears, that it is not subjoined merely as a continuation and enlargement of the former, but as an addition and contrast to it. Our Lord had contended, that the works, which the Father enabled him to perform, proved that he had been sent by the Father. He then *assumes* the truth of that inference, and proceeds to speak of

the Father, as “the Father which had sent him.” And he stated, still further, that the Father, as having sent him, had even given a personal, direct, and express declaration respecting him. This, therefore, must be something distinct from the miracles which our Lord himself wrought.—Some having observed this, and also the mention in the latter part of the text, of the *word of the Father*, have referred this to the *written word of God* in the law and the prophets. But to adopt this opinion, would identify the subject of this passage with that of the *following* verses, in which our Lord makes a distinct appeal to the Scriptures, or *written word of God*. But here he evidently speaks of a *personal* testimony ; nor can we have much hesitation in concluding that he referred therein to that personal and audible testimony, which was borne to him by a voice from heaven, when, having been baptized by John, he came out of the waters of Jordan. And this reference was, if not on this occasion necessary, yet very appropriate and convincing. For in the opening of his discourse, as we have already seen, he spoke of God, as “his own proper Father ;” of himself, as “the Son whom the Father loveth, and who sought the will of the Father which had sent him.” Now when that “Father which had sent him, himself bore witness of him,” on the occasion which we

have specified, he declared, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased^a. ”

The same heavenly voice, which witnessed to Jesus at his baptism, also witnessed, and in nearly the same words, at his transfiguration.—I mention this now, in order to remark, that if we require any further proof that we have been giving a correct representation of our Lord’s meaning, we may find it in a well-known passage of St. Peter. For that Apostle first argues from the testimony given to Jesus by the voice from heaven at his transfiguration, and then from the testimony of prophecy ; exactly in the same manner in which our Lord subjoins an appeal to prophecy to his notice of the similar testimony given by the Father at his baptism. “ We have not,” says the Apostle, “ followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take

^a Matt. iii. 17.

heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place ^b." And the Apostle then enlarges upon the right principle of the interpretation of prophecy, and its divine original.

By thus considering, singly, the *first* clause of our text, and also by connecting it with the preceding words, we have, I think, ascertained its true purport. The *remaining* clauses will strengthen us in the same opinion, and will present themselves for consideration in a subsequent part of this Lecture.

It will be expedient, therefore, now to direct our attention to the remarkable incident specially referred to, and to the *two other* occasions on which the Father, in the same way, bore witness to Jesus. We may, I think, even extend our view still further. For there were several other occasions, on which Jesus was exhibited to us as the *subject* of miracles, as well as the *worker* of them; not, indeed, receiving a divine attestation by means of the audible voice of the Father from heaven, as in the three instances just specified; yet in a manner, which is decidedly distinguishable from his own miracles, and which, equally with the former instances, bespeaks the interposition and approbation of the Father. Each of these facts tends to establish the justice of the claim which

^b 2 Pet. i. 16—19.

Jesus advanced to the dignity and knowledge, the power and authority, of the Son of God. And when all are considered in connexion, they furnish a distinct and important body of evidence.

As the instance, specially referred to in the text, occurred at the commencement of our Lord's public ministry, so the first occurrence of a similar character accompanied his first introduction into the world.—The *miraculous conception* of our Lord in the womb of a virgin, is of the highest importance, whether we consider it with reference to the doctrines of the Gospel, or to its evidences. If we consider it with reference to the divinity of our Lord, we shall find that it is no easy task to reconcile it with any other supposition, than that he, who was thus born of a pure virgin by an unprecedented and supernatural generation, was our Emmanuel, "God with us;" and that it was the divine, pre-existent, and eternal Word, who "was thus made flesh." And we shall therefore confess the propriety and evidence with which the Angel, after having announced to the Virgin the approaching overshadowing of the power of the Highest, added these words, "Therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called (or rather, *shall be acknowledged to be*) the Son of God^a."

^a Luke i. 35.—κληθήσεται υἱός Θεοῦ.

It will appear, in the sequel of this Lecture, that Jesus, by the three declarations from heaven, received a divine attestation of his investiture with the three offices of priest, prophet, and king. And if the fact of his miraculous conception, and the attendant circumstances of his birth, be established upon sufficient evidence, we are thereby also, as we shall immediately shew, assured of a previous divine interposition. These will likewise evince, by the nature of the facts themselves, by the circumstances connected with them, and by the angelic declarations which then explained their design, that Jesus was both qualified to undertake those offices on our behalf, and that he was actually invested with them.

We find in the evangelical records, an ample and perspicuous detail of these incidents, resting upon the same authority as the rest of the narrative. Two Evangelists, indeed, have not touched upon the subject of the birth of Jesus; but St. Matthew and St. Luke, who have done so, both concur in the same general statement, though St. Luke specifies some incidents which are omitted by St. Matthew, and omits others which the latter has related ^b.—But we are told by the Unitarian, for reasons as well known to us as to himself, that we are not to consider the two intro-

^b Matt. i. and ii. Luke i. and ii.

ductory chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, as either genuine, or authentic. The writings, in which that opinion is espoused, you can compare at your leisure with the full and satisfactory answers which they have called forth. But if it occur to you, as it has done more than once to myself, to hear such opinions broached in ordinary conversation, you may answer, that such a mutilation is sanctioned by no one single manuscript or version ; that the early reception of these parts of the Gospel is proved by the sentiments of the early Christian writers, and by their actual citations of them ; and that the only countenance for such a curtailment of the Gospels is derived from the extravagant procedure of two heretical sects, who, not by the sanction of any rules of criticism, or historical testimony, but in consequence of their pre-conceived heretical opinions, rejected these chapters, and with them the larger portion both of the Old and New Testaments. But admitting, as by every rule of just criticism we are bound to do, the genuineness and credibility of these chapters, an examination and comparison of the events recorded in them, will shew them to be such, so numerous, and so connected with each other, that the supposition of imposture and concert, and indeed of any other principle, than that they happened by the wonderful providence, and signal interposition of God, is both untenable and unreasonable.

That the Virgin could have no doubt, either of the visit of the Angel, or of her conception according to his annunciation, if they really took place, it were absurd to suppose. If these circumstances were fictitious, they were certainly only a small portion of an imposture, which had many and strange ramifications. Then were Zacharias, and Elizabeth, and Joseph, and the Shepherds, and the Magi, and Simeon, and Anna, all concerned in it; and Herod and the Sanhedrim were incautiously brought into connexion with the scheme. But consider the parts which they respectively acted, and the number, situation, and circumstances, of all concerned; for all these effectually tend to evince the reality of the events, and to remove, at every step, the supposition of imposture. Zacharias must have begun to carry it into execution in the *sanctuary* of the temple; on the only day, perhaps during his whole life, when he burnt incense in the order of his course^a; acting indeed in a manner which made all the congregation witnesses of his state. Coincident with this, was the preternatural conception of the *aged* Elizabeth; and then the visit of Mary to her, after an *angelic* annunciation, and *supernatural* conception. Remember that the whole imposture,

^a It seldom, if ever, happened, that the burning of incense fell twice to the lot of the same priest.

if such it was, proceeded upon the perilous assumption of the sex of both the children; and upon the assumption also, that having come to mature age, they would *willingly*, and *successfully* appear in two distinct and remarkable characters, assumed by them indeed, and specified by the predictions of those concerned, but also corresponding to the descriptions of the ancient prophets, and expected as about that period to appear, though in a far different manner. Consider again the incidents occurring at the circumcision of the son of Zacharias, which were noised abroad among the neighbours, which excited their attention, and awakened their expectations. Consider the extraordinary coincidence of political events, by means of which Mary, usually resident in Galilee, brought forth her promised Son at Bethlehem, the only birth-place suited to the character which her Son was to assume. Consider the shepherds abiding on that night in the fields of Judea, addressed by an angel, who announced to them the glad tidings of a Saviour, Christ, born to them in Bethlehem, the city of David; and hearing a chorus of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Consider the infant Jesus, visited in his lowly cradle, not by the Shepherds only, but by the Wise Men; who were summoned from a distant country by an extraordinary celes-

tial luminary, and, being directed by Herod himself and the Sanhedrim to Bethlehem, as the birth-place of the expected King of the Jews, saluted the new-born Jesus with royal presents. Consider Herod, and all Jerusalem with him, troubled at the intelligence; the sanguinary attempts of the Jewish monarch to crush him in his infancy; his deliverance by a divine premonition to Joseph; and the inspired declarations of Simeon and Anna in the temple, at Jerusalem, not only to his parents, but “to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”—Consider, I say, all these things. Reflect on the number of those concerned, and the difference of their respective stations, residences, and views. Call to mind the visit of angels to Zacharias in the sanctuary, to the Virgin in her solitude, to Joseph in his nightly repose, to the Shepherds in their nightly watches;—the heavenly signal which directed the Magi, and the dream which warned them of danger;—the providence of God delivering Jesus from a massacre, and, by his Spirit, inspiring prophets to predict his future glory. Sum up all these things, and consider the improbability of an imposture, the success of which was so remote, as well as so uncertain; nay, rather confess its impossibility under all the circumstances; and say to what other conclusion you can come, but that these things, explicitly and satisfactorily at-

tested as they are, are the witness of God, which he has given us of his Son, little less expressly than by his own audible declaration from heaven^a.

Many of those, who had been concerned in the transactions we have been considering, had been gathered to their fathers, and a period of thirty years had elapsed, when Jesus prepared to fulfil his high destiny, by entering on his public ministrations. He had been ushered into the world by circumstances which indicated the special interposition of the Father, and in which, therefore, he gave witness, that he had sent him for some great and holy purpose. We shall have to point out *three* distinct repetitions, during the short period of his *public life*, of “the witness of the Father.” And after the *separate* consideration of each of these, we shall also re-consider in connexion with it the witness of the Father, which had been given to the same effect, by the circumstances attendant on his birth.

I. At the usual age for entering on the Aaronic priesthood, Jesus came from Galilee, where he had been brought up, into Judea, to partake of that baptism, which John had been divinely commissioned to administer in the name of him who

^a He who wishes to see this most satisfactory argument fully discussed, may refer to the late Dr. Bell’s Inquiry into the Divine Missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ; a work which deserves to be more generally, and very attentively perused.

should come after him. When Jesus had received the rite of baptism, and was coming out of the water, “the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit, in a bodily appearance, as a dove, descended upon him, and, as John testified, “abode upon him.” At the same time there came also a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased^b.”—Thus had the Father himself given to Jesus authority to declare, as he did in the early part of the discourse, from whence our text is taken, “The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.” For he audibly announced that he was that “beloved Son, in whom he had ever been well pleased^b;” and thus he testified that he sanctioned and approved the office which he was about to undertake. According to prophecy, he then also “put his Spirit upon his servant, whom he upheld, his elect, in whom his soul delighted^c.” Thus was the Baptist himself enabled to point him out to others, as that exalted personage, to whom appertained the office of “baptizing with the Holy Ghost;” for he had now seen the exhibition of that signal which had been promised for his direction. Hence he could announce him as the Son of God, because he had

^b Matt. iii. 17.—ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα.

^c See Isai. xlii. 1. Also 2 Sam. vii. 14. Psal. lxxxix. 26, 27.

heard it so declared from heaven by that witness of the Father, which was evinced both to the eye and to the ear; and the reality of which does, from the very nature of the fact, prove its divinity.

But the Baptist also declared, by the same divine inspiration which had before guided his declarations, that Jesus was “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” If so, then Jesus was he, for whom “a body was to be prepared,” that he might “come, as in the volume of the book it was written of him, to do the will of God, when God no longer desired sacrifice and offering, nor required burnt-offering and sin-offering^a.” Then was Jesus that “most Holy” one, who was to be “anointed, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and to make the sacrifice and oblation to cease^b.” Then was Jesus he, who was to be “a priest upon his throne^c,” uniting in himself the prerogatives of Aaron and of David: for, though “not called after the order of Aaron, he was called to be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec^d,” and though he was David’s Son, he was also “David’s Lord^e.” Jesus is indeed “the High priest of

^a Isai. xl. 6, &c.

^b Dan. ix. 24, 27.

^c Zech. vi. 13.

^d Heb. v. 6, &c. and chap. vii. Ps. cx. 4.

^e Ps. cx. 1.

our profession." By his participation of human nature, he was made acquainted with our infirmities, and thus can be "a merciful as well as a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." But by his supernatural and immaculate conception we know that he is "such an high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," because he is not "shapen in iniquity, nor conceived in sin^f." Thereby we also know that he is the Son of God, and therefore, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood^g."—And by the witness of the Father at his baptism we know that as he was called of God to be a high priest, so was he also consecrated by God. "The word of the oath, of which David spoke in the hundred and tenth Psalm, maketh the Son a high priest, who is consecrated for evermore^h;" and the voice from heaven at his baptism declared that the Father was well pleased in the priestly functions which he was then about to discharge. He was at that time visibly inaugurated, in the sight of men, in a manner analogous to that by which the Aaronic priests were consecratedⁱ. As *they* were washed with water, so was *he*; and as *they* were anointed with oil, so did

^f See Heb. ii. 16—18 ; iii. 1, 2 ; vii. 24—28.

^g Heb. vii. 24.

^h Ps. cx. 4. Heb. vii. 28.

ⁱ Exod. xxix. 4—7. Lev. viii. 6—10.

he partake of the measureless and abiding unction of that Holy Spirit which was thereby typified.

This attestation of the Father had already been given to Jesus, at the time when he spoke the words of our text. If it be connected with the witness of John, with his supernatural birth, and with the prophecies of the ancient Scriptures, it points out to us Jesus, as the Son of God, appearing as our high priest. But if considered merely as a *detached* fact, it is declaratory of his divine mission. And our Lord, in the latter part of the text, so applies it for the conviction of those whom he addressed. And since his remarks referred to that incident, we must adopt that particular exposition of the allusion, which corresponds to our opinion respecting the circumstances of that fact ; for he therein specifies three of the particulars concerned, the *audible voice* of the Father, the *visible appearance*, and the *word* which was heard. If, according to the opinion entertained by some, and which seems the impression naturally produced by a perusal of the narrative, we suppose that this heavenly appearance and declaration took place in the sight and hearing of those who came to be baptized by John ; and that possibly, therefore, some of those whom our Lord addressed, were themselves present, we shall of course render the first clause of the passage interrogatively, as the original will certainly allow us to do : “The

Father, who hath sent me, himself hath borne witness of me. Have ye never at any time heard his voice, nor seen his appearance? And ye have not his word (his declaration) abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.”—If we suppose, with others, that *only John and Jesus* were present at this scene, then we may understand our Lord as granting, that they had not themselves heard the voice, and seen the appearance, when the Father testified that “he was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.” Yet as John had both seen, and heard, and also had publicly testified of these things, they erred by not retaining an abiding recollection of this declaration of God; and, by not believing in him whom the Father had sent, they were neglecting and despising the express witness of God himself.—But even if we suppose that John alone was, with Jesus, the spectator and auditor of these things, yet two instances of a similar kind soon afterwards occurred, which are attested by a greater number of witnesses; so that these incidents derive support from each other, both as to the certainty of the fact, and as to the heavenly information thereby conveyed.

II. The Father himself again bore witness of Jesus at the time of his transfiguration.—Those, who were with Jesus at the time, were Peter, and James, and John. The incident is

related, circumstantially, by each of the three first Evangelists; and St. John also seems principally to refer to it when he says; “We have beheld his glory, as that of the only-begotten of the Father^a.” St. Peter also, in words which we have already quoted from his second Epistle, largely states its certainty, its circumstances, and the evidence which it gave to Jesus. At the time, the splendour of a scene so glorious impressed St. Peter so powerfully, that, in energetic language, “not knowing what he said,” he gave vent to his feelings; in language, however, which, though unadvised, proved his full conviction of the reality of the unexpected scene. But in the words which we cited from his Epistle, written but a short time before he sealed his testimony with his blood, he speaks of it with a coolness, which indicated a sober and matured conviction of the reality of that scene, of which he and others had been eye-witnesses, of which he retained so vivid a recollection, and of the design and evidence of which he had now so distinct an apprehension. Not only was *Jesus* seen by the three disciples, arrayed in the “body of his glory,” but *Moses*, the legislator and prophet of the Jews, was there; and *Elias* also, one of the most eminent later

^a Matt. xvii; Mark ix; Luke ix; John i. 14.

prophets, and the restorer of the law. With them Jesus held familiar converse, the grand subject of which was his approaching death. But shortly they retired, and Jesus was left *alone*; then to receive that testimony from heaven, which was to declare his divine and unrivalled dignity. “A bright cloud overshadowed the disciples; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye him.*”

It will readily occur to any one, who considers the terms of this declaration, that it supplies us with a divine interpretation of that prediction, which was delivered by Moses to the Israelites, when they had desired that they might not again see the awful glories, and hear the appalling thunders and voices of mount Sinai. “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken^b.” Such a prophet and mediator was to be sent to the Israelites, in compliance with the request which they had made, and in condescension to human infirmity. But though man should not again “hear the voice of the Lord God, nor see that great fire,” as in Horeb, on the day of the assembly; yet would God reveal his will in a manner equally authori-

^b Deut. xviii. 15—19.

tative, though with milder and less tremendous glory. The Lord said to Moses, after the solemn delivery of the law, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven^a." And after Jesus had been transfigured on the holy mount, the Father did again "talk with man from heaven;" declaring Jesus to be the mediator of the new covenant, as Moses had been of the old. He, to whom the Father thus gave witness, was sent to make known to us "the truth which he had heard of God." For God had declared by Moses respecting that Prophet, "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." When, therefore, the Father, giving testimony to Jesus, says to us, "Hear ye him," may we not be sure that "as the Father gave him commandment, so he spoke?" Although, therefore, in the dispensation of which Jesus is the prophet, "we are not come to the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and terrible words" of mount Sinai, but to the milder glories of mount Sion; yet "the word, which went forth from Sion," has its threatenings, as well as its grace and truth. "It shall come to pass," said the Lord again, "that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which that prophet shall speak

^a Exod. xx. 22.

in my name, I will require it of him.” And very justly, therefore, does the Apostle give to us the exhortation; “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we refuse him that speaketh from heaven;” even God himself, who “in these last days hath spoken unto us by his Son^b.”

Did we say that this heavenly Messenger was the *Son* of God?—What said the voice that came out of the cloud? “This is *my beloved Son*; hear ye him.” And was not the same testimony also given, when he was about to *enter* on his ministry? And had not that declaration, which avouched Jesus to be “the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased,” been previously declared *before* his birth, and been also confirmed by the *manner* of his birth? Did we not recite to you the words of the angel, announcing to the Virgin her approaching conception by the “overshadowing of the power of the Highest?” “*Therefore*,” said the heavenly herald, “that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called *the Son of God*.” Though Jesus appeared “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” yet are we to believe in him upon principles, and with views, which could not be applicable to any one, who was nothing

^b Heb. xii. 25. i. 1, 2.

more than a prophet of the human race. We have many declarations from the Father that he is the Son of God ; many declarations from himself, supported and confirmed by the witness of John, of his own works, and of prophecy, that he is the Son of God. Let then the “ word of the Father abide in you, that ye may believe in him whom he hath sent.” Hear him with that unreserved obedience of the full assurance of faith, which he may justly claim, who “ came down from heaven ;” and who possessed that extensive and familiar acquaintance with the divine will, which could be attained only by him, who was from eternity “ in the bosom of the Father,” who “ came from God, and went to God.”

In this manner has it been testified to us, that to Jesus belong the commission, and the authority, of the *Prophet* promised by Moses. And hence may we see, that while “ Moses was faithful in all his house, as a *servant*, for a testimony of those things *which were to be spoken after* ; yet that Jesus was so, as a *Son* over his *own* house^a.” But, by a *third* witness of the Father concerning him, he was declared to be “ the *King* whom, as his only-begotten Son, God would set upon his holy hill of Zion, though the rulers of the earth took counsel against him, and against his Anointed^b.”

^a Heb. iii. 5, 6.^b Ps. ii.

III. This third testimony was given, as it should seem, on the day on which Jesus entered Jerusalem in his lowly triumph, and on which he was saluted as “the Son of David, and the King of Israel,” by the eager multitudes, whose enthusiasm he *refused* to repress. Probably it was even in the temple itself, but certainly in Jerusalem, that the Greeks, who had come up to the feast, applied to the disciples that they might be permitted to see Jesus^c. Whether he granted their request, or not, is uncertain. But the discourse which he took occasion to deliver, and the incident which followed, especially deserve our attention. He immediately referred to that death, which he suffered only a few days afterwards, under the figure of corn, which, “except it fall into the ground and die, abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” His human nature felt all the fears and horrors which the prospect of his approaching sufferings might be expected to excite. But this public declaration of them was followed by as public a “witness of the Father” from heaven.—“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” This, whether it was the language of submission, or of prayer, equally

^c See John xii. 20—36.

prepares us to attend to what followed. “ Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, *I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again.* The people, therefore, that stood there, and heard it, said, That it thundered; others said, An angel spake to him.” The voice was distinctly audible to many, if not to all. The Greeks, if they were present, might not understand the language; and some of the Jews might be disposed to misunderstand and misrepresent it. But let us hear the remarks of Jesus respecting it, and we can easily judge whether they were *verified*. “ This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”

The Jews then present were unable to reconcile this with their late joyful hailing of Jesus as their Messiah, and with their expectations respecting the Messiah.—“ The people answered him, We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” Now though our Lord did not at that time add any explanation of the statement he had just made; he exhorted them to “ walk while they had the light, because the light would be with them only for a little while.” Soon the event, to which

he alluded, was to take place. And on a former occasion he said to them, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that *I am he*, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.” The Father had just given witness to him, and he had “done many miracles before them.” They ought, therefore, both to receive those communications which they could then comprehend, and also to believe that all others would afterwards be made intelligible. But very shortly the Father did “glorify his name ;” and, “in consequence of his being lifted up,” Jesus was “crowned with glory and honour,” and “all men were drawn to him.”

Was Jesus forsaken and disowned of the Father, because he was “given up into the hands of wicked men, and suffered death upon the cross?” The Father had spoken to him from heaven, and an angel from heaven strengthened him during his agony. But had he prayed to the Father to deliver him from the suffering of death, though he would “presently have given him more than twelve legions of angels,” yet “how then could the Scriptures have been fulfilled, that thus it must be?” Yet even in those very transactions, which were so ignominious and so pitiable, was the testimony of the Father given to Jesus.—For remember the preternatural darkness, which, at the time of the full moon, and beginning at noon-

day, for three hours overspread the land. And can we forget the circumstances which attested the truth of those words, so full of horror and yet so abundant in consolation,—so expressive of glory accruing to God, and of good will derived to men,—which were uttered by the lips of our dying Saviour? With a loud voice he cried, *IT IS FINISHED*. He bowed his head, and dismissed his Spirit.—Then was the law accomplished, then were the prophecies fulfilled, then was the salvation of man perfected. For did not God himself confirm this declaration, by the rending of the veil of the temple at the hour of incense, by the quaking of the earth, by the rending of the rocks, by the opening of the graves? The centurion, who stood near to the cross of Jesus, had before heard him exclaim, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But when he saw that Jesus, uttering the declaration, “It is finished,” expired under circumstances, which so manifestly declared the interposition of God, he was so impressed with the solemnity of the scene, and with the majesty of the innocent sufferer, that “he, and they also that were with him, feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God^a.”

Thus did the Father “again glorify his name,” by giving testimony to his Son. Thus

^a Matt. xxvii. 54. Mark xv. 39.

did he confirm the authority, and sanction the conduct of him, who had refused to repress the acclamations of the multitude who hailed him as “the Son of David, and as the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord ;” who himself also avowed to the high priest, that he was “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed.”—And had not the Father given the same testimony by the mouth of an angel, before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin? “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end^b.” He was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh ;” but, by the manner in which he was made a partaker of flesh and blood, we also see, that he was David’s Lord, as well as David’s Son ; and therefore that he, as “the Christ, does indeed abide for ever,” though as ruling, not on earth, but in heaven. For God himself has visited his people, by redeeming them from spiritual slavery ; and, in the house of his servant David, hath raised up a horn of Salvation from sin and condemnation ; by him, who was “called Jesus, because he would save his people from their sins.”

^b Luke i. 32, 33.

Though, therefore, the Jews demanded of Jesus, as the proof of his authority, “a sign from heaven,” and though their demand was refused, yet we see that, in fact, several such tokens were given; not, however, exactly in the manner which they presumptuously, and in the spirit of disbelief, required of Jesus, “tempting him.” For we must be content to receive the evidences of our faith in the manner in which they are *proposed* to us, and to abide by the inference to which they both severally and jointly lead us. Probably it is still true, that such as are not convinced by the numerous miracles which *Jesus* wrought, will not more readily be impressed by those, in which *the Father himself* bore witness of him. But when the demand of a sign from heaven was refused to those, who in such a temper demanded it, *the sign of the prophet Jonas* was promised to them^a. That sign also has been given. “Three days was the Son of man in the heart of the earth,” and then was he *again*, and “with power, declared to be the Son of God, by the resurrection from the dead.” Then was the witness of the Father *completed*; and then also began that witness of the Spirit, the rejection of which renders men incapable either of repentance or of pardon.

Calling to mind, then, all the wondrous events,

^a See Matt. xii. 35—42.

and heavenly testimony, which we have been surveying, with what reverence, confidence, and obedience may we listen to the words, which our Saviour spoke, after he had predicted the sign of Jonas the prophet. “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and, behold, *a greater than Jonas* is here! The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and, behold, *a greater than Solomon* is here!” We have this day learnt that he was “*the beloved Son of God*, in whom he is well pleased, and whom we are commanded to hear.” Let us then “take up our cross and follow him;” let us “abide in his word, that we may be his disciples indeed;” let us glory in his cross; let us confide in his atonement; let us pray for pardon through his blood and righteousness; let us rejoice in his intercession; and let us pray to be sanctified by his word, and by his Spirit. For, very shortly after he had spoken the words just cited, he said also, “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother^a.”

^a Matt. xii. 38—50.

LECTURE XII.

OUR LORD'S APPEAL TO THE SCRIPTURES OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT, AS PECULIARLY DESIGNED TO
TESTIFY OF HIM.

St. JOHN V. 39, 40.

*Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have
eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.
And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

WE observed, in our fourth Lecture, that our Lord either left the attestations to his divine mission and character to convince by their own native force and palpable evidence, or proposed them in the most simple manner, until fuller statements and more detailed arguments were called forth by the doubts and difficulties, the prejudices and opposition of his contemporaries. But when such occasions arose, he unfolded to them as much as the imperfect accomplishment of the purposes of his mission, and therefore the incomplete exhibition of its evidences, would permit. Often, however, his statements are applicable to, and anticipate the fuller developement of the evidences; of which, indeed, the discourse in which our text

occurs is a remarkable instance. Those of his reasonings in this discourse, which we have already considered, are sufficient to establish the justice of this remark. When he noticed to them the presumption in his favour from his not seeking his own will, when he appealed to the witness of John, to the witness of his own miracles, and to the witness of the Father, he had laboured so long and so publicly among them, that enough was already before them, if not finally to convince, yet at least to arrest the attention. Enough had been already seen and heard to claim for him an impartial hearing; enough to induce them, if not even then to believe in him, yet to pause ere they rejected his claims. And in order to come to a just and satisfactory decision, it was requisite that they should observe, in a candid frame of mind, his future conduct; and should also deliberately consider the more enlarged reasonings, upon which he would be ready to enter, whenever their difficulties called for appropriate statements, and whenever fresh facts either illustrated his former arguments, or supplied the materials for others.

The same remark is also applicable, and, in some respects, more fully, to the appeal made in the text to the written testimony, which the Scriptures of the Old Testament afforded to Jesus.—The events, in which any prophecy is accom-

plished, alone can finally decide, either its true *interpretation*, or the particular *object* to which it referred. It follows from hence, that the events in question must have come to pass, and their particulars must be fully known, before that interpretation can be definitely settled, and the attestation of prophecy can be rightly ascertained. Now the prophecies of the Old Testament, which relate to the Messiah, are very numerous, and refer to a great variety of particulars. Of course, therefore, when the Messiah came, before he could be completely identified, all the characteristics by which the prophets had described him must have been exhibited ; and therefore all the events, in consequence of which they were to be developed, must have taken place. We believe that, at the very time specified by the prophets, their predictions were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. If in him they were not accomplished, there is certainly no other in whom they were ; no other, respecting whom the assertion can be advanced. But the great argument, deducible from a collective view of all the prophecies, could not be complete, until after those transactions which closed his ministry and life ; by which so large a proportion of the prophecies were rapidly, but minutely, fulfilled. Yet even at the time when our Lord spoke the words of our text, much had already become sufficiently obvious. And since an apprehension

of the entire prophetic argument could not be attained, except by discerning the correspondence of a great number of particular events to at least as many particular predictions, it would have been well if those, whom our Lord addressed, had even then commenced the inquiry. For having thus seen the fulfilment of prophecy already evinced to a certain extent, they might have been prepared to watch the progress of his ministry, and would have recognized thereby, more and more clearly, him, “ of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.”

Rightly to apprehend the evidence which arises from the word of prophecy, we must have recourse to that repository, in which it has been handed down to us. We must comply with the exhortation, which our Lord in the text addressed to the Jews. We must “ search the Scriptures.” We must investigate and study the particular predictions therein contained, and observe their order and connexion; and, by comparing them with those events which correspond to them, as recorded either in the same Scriptures, or in other writers, we must trace their accomplishment. Such an undertaking would evidently be too extensive to be brought within the compass of our present design. There is, however, a more limited range, which falls within the path we at first marked out. For we proposed to contemplate the

subject of evidence, either as it is actually *contained* in our Lord's discourses, or immediately *suggested* by them. Now our Lord has himself actually cited many important prophecies, to many he obviously alludes, and others afford at least a valuable elucidation of his statements. Even this more confined review exhibits, in a very satisfactory manner, the testimony of prophecy to Jesus; and also, which is even still more important, it supplies us with such directions and suggestions as are sufficient to lead us to a proper and conclusive view of the whole argument. It will be the object of our next Lecture, to take a cursory view of these actual citations and illustrations of prophecy by our Lord himself. In the remainder of this we shall consider the subject more *generally*, but still in immediate connexion with our text.

We have just cited the first clause of it, as containing an *exhortation* to "search the Scriptures." But many have preferred a translation of the verb in the indicative mood. According to this view, we must understand our Lord as granting to the Jews, that they did search the Scriptures; a concession, which all that we know of that nation, and especially of its leading men, shews to be made according to fact. To understand the words in this manner is, perhaps, more consistent with the *style* and *method* of argu-

mentation throughout the whole discourse, which in no other instance is in the hortatory form. But still the same recommendation, which is *expressed* in the other translation, perhaps more agreeably to the *phraseology* of the original, is in this *implied* with almost equal force. Our Lord evidently conveys, in either case, his decided commendation of their attention to Scripture; and he assigns the powerful motive, which either did, or ought to influence them in such a pursuit: “Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.”

With respect to the Jews of that time, this motive might have considerable difference of character and operation. Some of them seemed to think that the *mere* searching of the Scriptures, and “making broad the phylacteries” on which its words were inscribed, were of themselves meritorious acts; and that thereby “they had eternal life.” Others might think it attainable by observance of the *ritual* law of Moses. Others, like the scribe with whom Jesus conversed, doubtless esteemed the *moral* law as more than all “whole burnt-offerings and sacrifice,” and that the things therein prescribed they must “do, to inherit eternal life.” And, doubtless, they looked forward to the Messiah, as their own writings testify, as the *bestower* of eternal life on the *Jews*; and some of those, who waited for “the consola-

tion of Israel," probably derived from the Scriptures an expectation less free from the general prejudices of their nation ; and expected him who was to be " the glory of his people Israel," would also be " a light to lighten the Gentiles."—But to all these our Lord's argument was equally cogent. Whatever were the modifications of their sentiments, it was believed by all, except the Sadducees, that in them they had *eternal life* ; and therefore did they value them, and therefore were they bound, by their own principles, to make themselves fully acquainted with their contents. We also are assured, that the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation ; and that their record is, not only that " God hath given to us eternal life," but also " that this life is in his Son ;" and that, ' both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind through Jesus Christ, as the only Mediator between God and man^a. ' Yet the Jews in general " were not willing to come to him that they might have life." They had untraced such interpretations of the prophecies, as could result only from attending to some, and overlooking others. And when these others were pointed out, and when the event shewed the proper sense both of these and of the former, their prejudices in favour of their own interpretation,

^a Art. VII.

and against the external humility of a suffering Messiah, armed their perverse and depraved wills against the decision, which would have been suggested by an unfettered judgment ; and therefore were they “unwilling to come to Jesus that they might have life.” They themselves thought that in the Scriptures they had eternal life ; and, added our Lord, “they are they which testify of me.”

In this important declaration, our Lord not only asserts that the Scriptures would be found to predict and testify of him, but that he was that exalted Person, who, as Jewish writers themselves have confessed, is the great and continual theme of all the prophets. He lays down therein that principle, which is, in fact, a guide to the consistent and complete elucidation of the whole prophetic scheme. Prophecy had indeed a present and immediate use in supporting the hope, and exercising the faith, of those to whom it was first delivered. But even this end was attained by speaking of good things to come ; and by giving repeated assurances that a personage, who, after having been designated by various other titles and characteristics, was at length called “Messiah the Prince,” would in the latter days appear to accomplish the purposes of God, and to complete the felicity of man. To predict the advent of Messiah—to communicate the previous knowledge of those marks by which he might be recognized

as he that was to come—to display the necessity, and to explain the object of his coming—and to attest the importance of his mission, by shewing that all the revolutions of the world, as well as of the Jewish people, were overruled in order to prepare for his advent, and for the establishment of his kingdom—this was the main end and aim of “all that was spoken by the mouth of God’s holy prophets which had been since the world began.” Thus had the matter been stated by Zacharias in his prophetic hymn; thus was it stated by our Lord, when, after his resurrection, “he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself, beginning at Moses and all the prophets.” Thus did the Apostles declare, that “to him give all the prophets witness;” thus did the angel declare also to St. John, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy^a ;” ‘the spirit of prophecy having no other use or end than to bear testimony, and to do honour, to him^b.’

^a Luke i. 68, &c. xxiv. 27, 44. Acts x. 43. Rev. xix. 10. See also 1 Pet. i. 10—12. 2 Pet. i. 19—21.

^b Bishop Hurd in Sermon. II. on the Prophecies.—He who, like the Ethiopian convert (Acts viii. 27, &c.) is ready to say, “How can I understand what I read in the Prophets, except some man should guide me?” may with great satisfaction and benefit peruse Bishop Hurd’s Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies, Sermon. I—VI; Bishop Sherlock’s Discourses on the Use and Intent of Prophecy; the four first Sermons of Bishop Horsley, Vol. II; and
two

Let this principle be kept in view, and it will shew, in the clearest manner, the object, and the connexion, of all that the prophets have spoken. It will teach us rightly to estimate the nature and the evidence of prophecy. It will shew that it was not vouchsafed to gratify the curiosity of mankind, or to serve a merely temporary purpose ; but that it was designed to demonstrate not so much the general superintendence of divine providence, as that particular and important exercise of it, which was subservient to the establishment of the Gospel. Hence it will also appear that the prophetic spirit was generally confined to one family and nation, not out of a peculiar favour or preference to them ; but that these oracles were committed to their care, in order that the priority of their existence, and their uncorrupted preservation, might be guaranteed and demonstrated. For, at the arrival of that period which was the fulness of the time, considered with reference to the predictions themselves, and the fitness of the time, considered with reference to the actual state of the world, “ the Gentiles were to become fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of *the promise of God*

two very valuable tracts by Mr. Rotherham, published in 1753, and 1754, entitled, “ The Force of the Argument from a collective view of Prophecy,” and “ a Sketch of the one great Argument, formed from the several concurring Evidences, for the Truth of Christianity.”

in Christ by the Gospel.”—The argument from prophecy is, therefore, one, which appeals alike to Jew and Gentile. To the Jew—because he, for other and independent reasons, receives, venerates, and preserves the Scriptures as the word of God ; and because he, therefore, has a deep interest in the promises of the Messiah therein contained, and is bound to inquire into the reality of their accomplishment. To the Gentile—because the prior existence of such a volume of predictions, does, if they have been fulfilled, bespeak his assent also to the revelation made by that God, who “has in these last days spoken by his Son,” and has employed the wonders of his providence to assure us of the wonders of his grace. In order to enable the Jews to verify the claims of the Messiah when he appeared among them, one prophecy had been added to another, beginning from the first general promise of the efforts and triumphs of the seed of the woman, proceeding to limit the line of his descent within continually narrower bounds, and then, in succession, specifying a great variety of features in his character, and of circumstances in his life and proceedings, so unprecedented, so remarkable, and apparently so inconsistent, as to defy the most ingenious *fiction* to be so constructed before the event, as to unite them in one character, with a semblance of fulfilment.—When we contemplate the ap-

pearance of Jesus, we see at once that *some* remarkable personage has been manifested, assuredly of the house and lineage specified in *earlier* prophecy; and answering, both in the place and the circumstances of his birth, to the predictions of the *later* prophets. He appears as a prophet sent from God; and having discerned, in the first instance, the approach of some Great One, we proceed, on a nearer view, to the discovery of one feature after another, until we recognize in him the personage previously described, and anxiously expected, though not appearing at first in that character and dignity, in which the Jews most frequently and most fondly expected the Messiah. But circumstance is added to circumstance, till we find him to be the Messiah, to whom all the prophets gave witness; and that he has accomplished, or is setting forward the accomplishment of all that the prophets had predicted; so that not one word has failed of all that they had spoken, and that the Evangelists have narrated “no other things than those, which the prophets and Moses did say should come.”

It is manifest, from what we have already observed, that the prophetic argument is one of great extent, comprehension, and force. When we consider its *extent*, we immediately perceive that the materials for its developement began to be provided from the very beginning of the world.

and that they were continually accumulating through a series of more than four thousand years. We shall find also, that many of the earlier predictions receive much illustration from considering the *time* at which they were delivered, and the circumstances of the *persons* to whom, or by whom, they were spoken. They are, in fact, arranged in such an order, that each succeeding one, till, at least, the time of David, would lose much of its force and propriety, if delivered at an earlier period, and if the order were even disarranged at all^a. We gather from hence, that they are means used in order to further one uniform, momentous, and continually advancing scheme; we see how suited they were to the immediate purpose of inspiring, cherishing, and elevating, the faith and hope of primeval times; and we pass on to watch, with calm and increasing confidence, for their full and evident accomplishment. And whether we thus advance from the consideration of them in their order and variety, to contemplate the events of the age in which they were fulfilled; or whether we begin from those events, and refer back to the prophecies; we cannot but observe, with wonder, that they not only furnish a distinct evidence in themselves, but that they had speci-

^a See this strikingly illustrated in Rotherham's "Argument drawn from a collective View of Prophecy," p. 10, &c.

fied beforehand every other evidence, and that every other evidence is illustrated by them. For the prophecies are found to have their fulfilment not only in that particular series of ordinary events which occurred during the life of Jesus, but also in such facts, and instructions, and proceedings, as themselves are independent evidences of a divine mission. Almost every circumstance which has been considered in our former Lectures, was a fulfilment of prophecy; we may almost say that the very *arguments* themselves are pointed out by the prophets; but at least we have found that each of our Lord's reasonings could be very satisfactorily *illustrated* by a reference to the Old Testament predictions. This remark, which points out the *comprehensiveness* of the argument from prophecy, also very obviously suggests the great *force* which it possesses. And prophecy will still more constantly and prominently connect itself with the subjects of our future inquiry. Well therefore might our Lord observe in language so significant, "The Scriptures are *they which testify of me*^b." As if he had said, 'They are the special, comprehensive, and sufficient testimony respecting me. My coming, my character, my proceedings, my instructions, and the object at which I aim, are all attested by them. My future sufferings and ex-

^b ἐκεῖναι εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ. ν. 39.

altation will be in conformity to their predictions. Every argument which I can offer, will be found justified by their intimations, if you will but search them, as well as by the facts which are familiar to you, and upon which I have been reasoning.'

It should also be remembered, that these prophecies were delivered, not only at a great diversity of times, ages, and countries, but in a great variety of methods. Sometimes God himself communicated the promise in words. Sometimes he revealed it in a dream or in a vision, and provided that a prophet or an angel should give an interpretation of these, which itself became a prophecy, to be explained only by the event. Sometimes he immediately inspired the prophet himself to deliver it in his own words. "Thus, at sundry times, and in divers manners, God spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets." And they, who were either the recipients, interpreters, or promulgators of these diversified communications, were men of all ranks, ages, conditions, and circumstances ; severally according to their own necessities, or the situation and circumstances of others, or of their country, or of the world, receiving intimations of those things which should come to pass. The events which were to precede, and to prepare the way for the fulness of the time in which the Promised One was to appear, were those transactions and revolutions of the four

great monarchies, which are the well known subjects of ancient and classical history. The predictions respecting *these* were fulfilled only in the course of many centuries. Those, which respected the personal appearance of the Messiah, were sometimes delivered conjointly with the former, sometimes were distinct from them; but were fulfilled in the course of a very few years. All together formed one connected chain. The events were such, and so numerous, as to exclude the possibility of accounting for this conformity to previous annunciation by the supposition of *casual coincidence*; nor could the mere *conjectures* of the wisest mortals have so accurately described them. Either we must say that they were delivered by the communication of him, who alone could *foresee* those *contingent* events, which are brought about by the ordinary motives and proceedings of human conduct; or that the same great Being, “who doeth according to his will among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,” *moulded, controlled and adjusted* the motives, actions, and successes of all these numerous assents, so as to *produce* an exact conformity to the predictions of the prophets. Either of these suppositions involves the *interposition* of the Deity. And in the same manner as a miracle implies and teaches the exercise of the same *Omnipotence* which created the world, and which gave to the

course of nature a law unbroken, except at the will of the Creator; so does the clear previous existence of prophecy, and the certainty of its extensive fulfilment, prove that he, whose *omniscience* perceives, whose *prescience* foresees, and whose *providence* overrules all things, must in this case also have interposed. And we need surely no argument to convince us that he, who is the God of nature, is the same God, who alone “declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” His alone is that “wisdom, which reacheth from one end to the other mightily, and doth sweetly order all things.”

We have now taken a general survey of the manner in which the Scriptures of the Old Testament give testimony to Jesus, as the Messiah promised of old. We have principally alluded to the *express predictions* of the Old Testament; and also to the history of the earlier ages of the world, as indicating a tendency of all the *arrangements of Providence* towards the fulfilment of those predictions in their season. In the meantime, those assurances of mercy thus given to the Fathers, and the holy covenant into which God entered with them, were sufficient to animate and guide them in their pilgrimage through this world to a better and a heavenly country. For by the

miracles which sometimes accompanied the delivery of these predictions, and by the partial fulfilment of them, or of others of a similar origin, they had such evidence of the care and gracious intentions of that God, “who had provided better things for us, that they without us should not be *made perfect*,” as that even they “died in faith; not having received the promises indeed, but having so seen them afar off, as to be persuaded of them, and to embrace them.”—And in another way also did the provisions of earlier revelation provide a testimony to the promised Messiah. The method of worship by sacrifices, the various ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual, and very many of the peculiar arrangements of their civil and political system, were all occasioned by the design of raising up out of the Jewish nation that Deliverer, who was predicted by their own prophets. The consideration of the numerous particulars to which we have alluded is highly satisfactory; for it tends to strengthen more and more our conviction that the Scriptures of the Old Testament, are *they that testify* of Jesus. For it shews not only that their predictions describe him, and that the events which they relate were preparing for his advent, but also that the civil and political injunctions were designed to shew that he was born of the promised house and lineage, and that the religious cere-

monies, in a vast variety of methods, represented and typified his character and understanding^a.

“ Search, then, the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life. And they are those which testify of ME,” said Jesus, whom we believe to have been the Christ.—Now the Scriptures, eternal life, and Jesus Christ, are terms familiar to us, and in some degree, at least, understood by all of us. And it is by allowing the connexion and mutual dependency of the ideas thereby conveyed, that the Christian deduces those principles and motives, and cherishes those hopes and expectations, which distinguish him from the Jew and the Infidel.—The Infidel, indeed, either does not at all concern himself about the hope of eternal life ; or he derives it from the boasted arguments of natural religion, independently both of the Scriptures, and of him, who, “ through the Gospel, has brought life and immortality to light.” —The Jew does indeed look forward to eternal life, but he derives not that hope from the record which God has given of his Son Christ Jesus. For he believes not that Jesus was one whom God had sent ; and, therefore, while he admits the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old

^a Among other excellent works which would elucidate this part of our subject, I would refer more especially to “ Allix’s Reflections on the Old and New Testament.” They are reprinted in Bp. Watson’s Tracts, Vol. I.

Testament referred to in the text, and allows that they testify of a promised Messiah, he believes not that Jesus is that Messiah. Multitudes of Jews have, indeed, even in modern times been induced, from the evidence of the prophecies, to admit the Messiahship of Jesus, and have embraced the Christian faith. Very many of these have been *learned* men, and have left behind them, in their several writings, a statement of the reasons which influenced them^b. But *as a nation*, they reject the claims of Jesus. In the apostolic times also, “great multitudes of Jews,” “many even among the chief rulers,” believed on him, and “a great company of their priests became obedient to the faith^c.” But then also, *as a nation*, they rejected him. The motives and grounds of that rejection, in some respects common to unbelievers of all ages and nations, our Lord notices in the words following the text, which will be considered in a future Lecture. But when our Lord delivered this discourse, these principles had not yet come into full operation. The question of his divine mission and Messiahship was as yet, in a great

^b See a very interesting account of the conversion and writings of Jewish Rabbis, and of their labours among their countrymen, at the end of Chapman's Eusebius ; who gives references to those authorities which he says would have enabled him to enlarge his list.

^c John xii. 42. Acts vi. 7 ; xxi. 20.

measure, undecided. The Jews, and more especially their rulers, were evidently prejudiced against him, and rather disposed to oppose and persecute him, than to admit his claims. This prejudice and opposition had not, however, proceeded to the lengths to which it afterwards did ; but only so far as to draw from our Lord a more full statement respecting his claims, and the several arguments which he was able to produce in support of them. We have heard what claims he advanced, we have considered his reasonings, we have surveyed and scrutinized the facts to which he referred, and we have now considered that testimony of Scripture to which our Lord last directed the attention of those whom he addressed. How then are we affected with regard to this important question, respecting eternal life, and that divine messenger who was sent to offer, who died to procure, and who was exalted to bestow a boon so unspeakably precious? Do we virtually symbolize with the Jew and the infidel, either refusing, because of the objections which are suggested to our understanding, or neglecting, because of the backwardness of our hearts, to “ come to Christ that we may have life?”

If we entertain doubts respecting the fulness and conclusiveness of the Christian argument, have we given to it that deep and serious attention, by which alone we can be advancing to a

solid and abiding conviction? I cannot persuade myself that it can, in general, be necessary to enter on a large and laborious investigation of philosophical objections, and metaphysical reasonings, in order to attain a conviction sufficiently enlightened and rational; one upon which any thinking man will act, who remembers the shortness of life and the magnitude of the objects at stake, who considers the obvious force of the various reasons in favour of revealed religion, and the anxious scrutiny, both by friends and foes, which has not discovered the weakness, but shewn the strength of its evidence. Let us beware lest, after all, the truth be, that “we are not *willing* to come to Christ that we may have life;” because we are aware that he who will enter into life must keep the commandments, and that the narrow way that leadeth unto life is a way of holiness and self-denial. The defect is more generally in the will than in the understanding; and even when it appears to be in the understanding, it generally proceeds from that predominance of the will, enslaved by its affections and lusts, which is, in fact, the essence and operation of almost all the modifications of human depravity.


It is this unhappy slavery, this love of sin, of the world, and of our present interest, that operates, not only to produce infidelity, but many other errors, which deviate from the doctrine

according to godliness. I cannot but persuade myself, however, that a remedy is proposed in the text, which, if duly adopted, would be effectual, both as to errors in doctrine, and inconsistency in practice ; which can make us both wise unto salvation, and also thoroughly furnished unto all good works. “ Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.” Our ignorance, or our crude, partial, and unsanctified, knowledge of the Scriptures, is the fruitful source of error. Do we desire that it should be otherwise with us ? We must imitate the example of the Bereans ; and the same effects will follow in us with respect to the whole range of Christian doctrine and duty, which were produced in them with respect to that fundamental truth of our religion, the Messiahship of Jesus. “ They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so ; and therefore many of them believed^a.” Few comparatively, we trust, are they, who do not acknowledge them as the words of eternal life ; who do not know that they testify of Jesus, as “ the end of the law unto righteousness,” and “ as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” We fear, however, that few do value and *search* them

^a Acts xvii. 11, 12.

as such. Yet is there an expediency, almost amounting to a necessity, that both the preacher and the hearer of the Gospel should be well acquainted with these divine records. None doubt that “if any man *speak*, he must speak as the oracles of God;” and that from the discourses of our Lord, and the writings of his Apostles, he must learn, both the subject and the manner of Christian instruction. But a competent knowledge of the same Scriptures is also equally necessary to the Christian *hearer*. The allusions, reasonings, statements, and exhortations, of the preacher, will not otherwise be sufficiently intelligible and impressive. We fear, therefore, that the success of our ministrations is much less than it might be, if the word of God were more read in the family and in the closet. Our success would probably be far less than it is, if the reading of Holy Scripture were not so prominent a part of our public Service. For the knowledge and influence derived from that source we have, perhaps, more abundant cause to be thankful than we have yet been aware of. Yet how much greater would be our Christian edification, if the family altar, and the hour of retirement, could witness to our perusal of the Scriptures! From how many errors would this guard us, from how many temptations would it preserve us! How powerfully, though, perhaps, imperceptibly, would it dispose us to be

not willing only, but eager, and thankful, to come unto Christ, that we may have life!—Receive, then, and search the Scriptures, “not as the word of man, but, as they are in truth, the word of God, which effectually work also in them that believe.” Value and obey them, as those who know the authority which they possess, and the obligations which rest upon yourselves. For you rightly “think that in them you have eternal life.”



LECTURE XIII.

A REVIEW OF THE PARTICULAR INSTANCES IN WHICH
OUR LORD, DURING HIS LIFE, ACTUALLY CITES OR
ALLUDES TO THE PROPHECIES AND TYPES OF THE
ANCIENT SCRIPTURES.

St. MATTHEW XI. 12—14.

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And, if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come.

THIS explicit and comprehensive declaration did Jesus make to the assembled multitudes, after the dismissal of John's disciples with the answer to their master's message. He uttered these words with all the confidence and composure of one who "spoke that which he knew, and testified that which he had seen;" and he subjoined in this instance, as well as on other important occasions, the awakening words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The statement, which he had just advanced, did indeed demand attention, if they considered him from whom it proceeded. It came from one

to whom John had just been proposing the question, “ Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?” It came from one who had been performing in their presence such miracles, that the simple enumeration of them served as an answer to that question ; miracles, in consequence of which they themselves “ glorified God, saying, That a great prophet has risen up among us, and, That God has visited his people.”—The declaration also demanded attention, if they considered the purport of it. It announced to them the termination of that season, during which the glories of the latter days were made known to the sons of men only in consolatory promises, foreshadowing types, and prophetic anticipation. It announced the actual presence, exhibition, and offer of the expected blessings. It referred them to the valedictory declaration of the last of the prophets, with which, four hundred years before, the voice of prophecy had ceased, and by which the volume of inspiration had been completed. “ Remember ye,” said the Lord of hosts by Malachi, “ the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord^a.”—Thus were the Jews, to adopt the ex-

^a Mal. iv. 4, &c.

pression of an Apostle, to be “kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed^b.” Yet the law and the prophets were not silent respecting “good things to come.” Both the one and the other “prophesied.” Previously to the appearance of John the Baptist, these prophecies had not received their accomplishment. But then had that period commenced, in which “the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed^c.” “From the days of John the Baptist,” said our Lord, “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Such declarations as these also claim the attention of us Gentiles. For the things of which the law and the prophets prophesied, were spoken of “the last days, in which it was to come to pass that the mountain of the Lord’s house would be established in the tops of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills ; and all nations would flow into it.” And already has it come to pass that many nations have said, “Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths ; for out of

^b Gal. iii. 23.

^c Dan. ii. 44.

Zion hath gone forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem^a." He, who was the messenger of the new and universal covenant, through whose doctrine "the idols have been utterly abolished^b," and in whose name we trust, appealed to the law and to the prophets as giving witness to himself. He came "not to destroy, but to fulfil them." He referred to the Scriptures, as "they that testify of him," and to Moses, as "writing of him." He declared that "all things that were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man would be accomplished^c." And as he declared that "the law and the prophets prophesied *until John*," so did he manifestly thereby intimate, that in his time we may justly expect to find the accomplishment *begin*, and that from his time we shall be able to trace *its progress*.

In the investigation of this, as well as of the other evidences of the mission and character of Jesus, we may take his own discourses as a faithful and sufficient directory. He has not omitted either expressly to cite, or very intelligibly to refer to, the entire prophetic testimony respecting the Christ, and has required of us to inquire and judge for ourselves whether it has not received its fulfilment in himself. During his personal mi-

^a Isai. ii. 2, 3.

^b Ibid. v. 18.

^c Matt. v. 17. John v. 39, 46. Luke xviii. 31.

nistry, indeed, as we observed in the last Lecture, the proof from prophecy could not be fully stated and exhibited, because the most signal events to which the prophets referred had not then taken place. But the transactions of his crucifixion and resurrection having rapidly, and beyond all human calculation, evinced the fulfilment in Jesus of one large class of predictions, occasion was thereby given to appeal to them; and the way was also then prepared for the fulfilment of many others. But even during the progress of his personal ministry, a *portion* of the proof from prophecy was already developed, and was accordingly appealed to by Jesus.—And it is also worthy of remark, that during this period he made provision for the elucidation of the remainder, and also for the establishment of his own character as an original prophet, by express, literal, and enlarged predictions of *those very events*, which furnished the *clue* for unraveling the whole mystery of the prophecies, which reconciled the apparently contradictory attributes of the promised Messiah, and which displayed fully and finally the character of his office, the nature of his kingdom, and the purposes for which he was manifested. These several particulars we shall endeavour, under the guidance of the statements of Jesus, to elucidate in some future Lectures; confining our attention, during the remainder of this, to his actual citations

and allusions to the law and prophets during his *personal ministry*.

One of the circumstances upon which Jesus insisted, both at the opening, and once and again during the progress, of his ministry, was the fullness of the season marked out by a particular class of predictions, which had indeed already led the Jews previously to admit and adopt an opinion, that the promised Messiah would shortly come. “The *time is fulfilled*, and the kingdom of God is at hand^a.” And again, when they demanded “a sign from heaven,” he said, “Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern *this time*^b?” At another time, also, he referred them to “the *signs* of the times,” which would prepare them, “even of themselves, to judge what was right^c,” since they must either conclude that Jesus was “he that should come,” or that another speedily would come to accomplish the predictions of the prophets.

Jesus himself appeared in the character of “a *teacher* come from God,” referring to his works as a proof that he was “sent by God,” and that he “spoke the words of God.” He therefore taught “as one that had *authority*.” He declared that he “came to seek and to save that which was lost,” to “call not the righteous, but sinners to

^a Mark i. 15.

^b Matt. xvi. 1—3.

^c Luke xii. 56, 57.

repentance." He invited the "meek to learn of him ; the weary and heavy laden to come to him for the rest which he would give to their souls." In proof of this as the proper office of him, whom the prophets had announced, he referred, both in the synagogue at Nazareth, and also in the conference with John's disciples, to the passage in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, in which all this, with great particularity and variety of expression, was ascribed to him, upon whom would be "the Spirit of the Lord, because he was anointed to preach these glad tidings^d."—The same was also specified in many other passages of the Old Testament^e.

Though Jesus, as well as the Baptist, taught that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, yet he adopted, as the ordinary description of his official character, the title of "the Son of man." And from the way in which, on various occasions, he connected that title with other statements, he evidently intended to direct their attention to the following words of the prophet Daniel. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion,

^d Isai. lxi. 1—3.

^e Ibid. xi. 1—5 ; xlii. 1—8 ; lvii. 14—18, &c.

and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages should serve him ; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed^a." These words evidently describe a state of glory and exaltation ; and yet he, by whom such glory was to be attained, is called "one like the Son of man."—That phrase, at least, certainly applies to Jesus, who appropriated the title to himself ; for he did undoubtedly appear "in the likeness of men." But consider the remarkable manner and connexion in which he employed it as his appropriate designation. He spoke of a time when there should indeed "appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven ;" referring to that expectation of "a sign from heaven" which the Jews had derived from this prediction of Daniel, and of which they had several times required the exhibition. When calling God "his own Father," and speaking of himself in a manner consistent with such a claim, he declared that he, the Son of God, "had authority to execute *judgment* also, *because he is the Son of man.*" He spoke also of a time "when the Son of man should come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory ; in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." He not only spoke to Nico-

^a Dan. vii. 13, 14.

demus of "the Son of man coming down from heaven, and being in heaven," but also declared that "the Son of man must be lifted up;" but he declared publicly to the Jews, "when ye have lift up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he." And when on another occasion he declared that "when he was lifted up from the earth, he would draw all men to him," he had just said, "the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." And when he had affirmed, in answer to the question of the high priest, that he was the Christ, the Son of God, he added these remarkable words, "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Thus both by his assumption of this title, and also by his application to *himself* of those attributes, which appertained to him whose it really was, Jesus appealed to those prophecies which described the humanity, humiliation, and subsequent exaltation of Messiah; although he avoided the title of Messiah, which suggested to the minds of the Jews only the idea of earthly power^b.

^b Matt. xxiv. 30. John v. 27. Matt. xxv. 31. John iii. 13, 14; viii. 28; xii. 23. Matt. xxvi. 64. The Jews by adopting the title of Christ or Messiah, as the usual designation of "him that should come," seem to have connected with their expectations of him only the ideas immediately suggested by the title "Messiah
the

The prophecies, upon which perhaps Jesus dwelt most largely, were those which respected his forerunner, and their connected mission. He expressly cited to the multitudes the prophecy of Malachi, which spoke of him, as “the messenger who was to be sent to prepare the way of the Lord;” stating that John was he of whom this was written. He also added, with reference to the expectation which they still entertained respecting the *personal* appearance of Elijah, that “if they would receive it, he was the *Elias who was to come* ;” John being described under that name in the concluding words of Malachi^a. And the prediction of “the messenger of the Lord,” was immediately followed by the assurance that “the Lord whom they sought should suddenly come to

the prince.” (Dan. ix. 25.) Hence our Lord, and also the Baptist, principally adopted the *other* prophetic descriptions of the promised deliverer. We have contended in several passages of these Lectures, as indeed even a superficial observation of the Gospel history teaches us to do, that John did not call Jesus the Messiah, and that Jesus did not himself publicly adopt the title. We, as *Christians*, rightly conceive that this and the other scriptural titles of our Lord are convertible terms. In the Epistles, as being addressed to *Christians*, it is the term generally adopted. But when we peruse or interpret those parts of the New Testament, which record the discussions of those periods, when it was still in debate, whether Jesus was *the Christ*, and also whether the functions of the Christ were of a *spiritual* nature, we must bear in mind the *errors of the age* respecting that title, as well as its full and genuine import.

^a Mal. iii. 1—4; iv. 5, 6.

his temple, to purify the sons of Levi, and to purge them as gold and silver, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, and that the offering of Judah and Jerusalem might be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old." When, therefore, the witness of the Father and of the Baptist had declared of Jesus that he was the *Son of God*, he entered the temple, and expelled the traders from thence with the words, "Make not *my Father's* house a house of merchandise^b." And at a later period he exercised the same authority; which indeed belonged to him, if he was "one greater than the temple^c." And he then accompanied the act with the still more remarkable words; "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations^d." He therein actually cited a prediction of Isaiah respecting the calling of the Gentiles; and also brings to our recollection the prophecy of Haggai, that "the Desire of all nations should come, and that the Lord of hosts would fill that house with glory; and that the glory of the latter house should be greater than that of the former^e." Let it be remarked in addition to our former remarks on these transactions, that in the first instance the Jews asked him "what *sign* he shewed, seeing he did

^b See John ii. 13—22.

^c Matt. xii. 6.

^d Mark xi. 15—17. Isai. lvi. 7.

^e Hag. ii. 6—9.

such things." On that occasion, adapting his answer to their question, he referred them, as he always afterwards did, when they demanded a sign, to his resurrection from the dead. "Destroy ye this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." But in the latter case, when they merely proposed the question, "by what authority he did these things, and who gave him this authority," he then prepared to reason with them respecting the passage of Malachi, which connected the "sudden coming of the Lord whom they sought to his temple," with the "sending of the messenger to prepare his way before him," by asking of them, "whether the baptism of John were from heaven or of men." They knew the message that John had delivered; if then they allowed the authority of that messenger, whom he had immediately followed, and who had borne witness to him, his authority was that of "the messenger of the covenant, and of the Lord, whom they sought;" and he had suddenly come to his temple, as "one greater than the temple^a." And Jesus had also previously prepared them for considering this question, by his solemn entry into Jerusalem in the manner described by the prophet Zechariah; by receiving during his progress to the temple, and in the temple itself,

^a Compare 2 Chron. vi. 16—18, and Isai. ix. 6, 7, with Haggai ii. 7, and Mal. iii. 1.

the acclamations of the multitude, who saluted him as "the blessed one that cometh in the name of the Lord," and as "the Son of David." He refused to forbid or restrain these acclamations ; nay, he even declared that "if they were silent, the stones would immediately cry out." And when the Pharisees put to him the significant question, "Hearest thou what these say?" He answered, "Yea ;" and added, citing the words of the Psalmist, "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise^b?" Thus fully and willingly did Jesus appeal to the prophets, and cite from them such passages as either proved or illustrated his mission. And fain would he have reasoned with the Jews more largely upon the testimony of prophecy to those circumstances, which were already sufficiently before them, and to which such a discussion was already applicable.

When our Lord made the enlarged defence of his conduct before the Sanhedrim, and stated to them the evidences of his authority, he expressly stated, "If ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for *he wrote of me.*"—We can readily call to mind the several *promises* made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; all of which are recorded by Moses ; as are the *predic-*

^b Psalm viii. 2.

tions of Jacob and Balaam. But that which should have seemed most likely to have had influence with those, who boasted that they were Moses's disciples, was his prediction of the "Prophet like unto himself, who was to be raised up from among their brethren, and to whom they were to hearken." Yet as many of that generation would not hearken to the words, which that Prophet "spake in the name of God, who had put his words in his mouth," God did, as he had predicted by Moses, "require it of them." All the temporal calamities, which God's former dealings with the Jews would lead them to anticipate from such a threatening, "came," as our Lord predicted, "on that generation." For as before for their idolatries, so now for their rejection of him, in order to whose manifestation they had been preserved as a separate nation, their city and temple were destroyed, and themselves led away into captivity. And we have reason to believe it an historical fact, that none but those Jews, who became Christians, escaped from the calamities of the ruined Jerusalem.—Our Lord did not indeed *actually cite* any of these predictions during his *public* ministry. But we shall see, in our next Lecture, that he alluded very intelligibly to the first promise made to Adam; and that he also made a declaration, which shews that he intended us to recognize in himself that Seed, promised to Abraham, and also to Isaac, and to Jacob, "in

which all the families of the earth were to be blessed." And we would also remind you of his frequent assertions that the doctrine which he taught was that "which he had heard of God,"—that "*he* did not judge the man who rejected his words," but that there was one "who sought to be glorified, and would judge him,"—that "the word spoken, the same would judge him," because "the Father had given to himself a commandment what he should say, and what he should speak, and, as the Father gave him commandment, so he spoke." Now if these expressions do not, in the first instance, remind us of the prediction given by Moses, they at least receive an important illustration, and claim an increased and serious attention, when we read that prediction. For whosoever that Prophet was, whom God "raised up like unto Moses," and to whom he charged them to "hearken," it was said of him by God himself, "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I shall command him; and whosoever shall not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."

But there was another way in which "the law prophesied" of the blessings of the future dispensation, viz. by type and figure. This subject was fully unfolded by the Apostles after Jesus had actually accomplished all that was thereby shadowed forth. But there are at least three in-

stances in which Jesus has himself touched upon this subject. In allusion to the brazen serpent, which was raised on high amidst the Israelites dying of the plague, that they might look thereon, and be miraculously cured, our Lord said to Nicodemus ; “ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be *lifted up*, that whosoever *believeth in him*, should not *perish*, but have *everlasting life*^a. ” — After our Lord had fed the five thousand, the people, probably from a recollection of the manner in which Moses miraculously fed the Israelites in the wilderness, said, “ This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. ” And, finding Jesus, they spoke of “ their fathers having been fed with manna in the desert. ” Jesus said, “ Verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread *from heaven* ; but my Father giveth you the *true bread from heaven*. For the bread of God is *he*, which cometh down from heaven, and *giveth life* unto the world^b. ” — And when Jesus instituted the feast which is to be kept in remembrance of “ his being sacrificed for us as our passover,” he noticed the typical nature of the Jewish passover ; “ for he said unto the disciples, With desire I have desired to eat this

^a John iii. 14, 15. Numb. xxi. 6—9.

^b John vi. 31—63. Exod. xvi. 14, &c. Psalm lxxviii.

passover with you before I suffer ; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be *fulfilled in the kingdom of God*^c.”—And, when he said to the Jews, that “their father Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and saw it, and was glad^d,” we may justly suppose that he alluded to the typical nature of the sacrifice of Isaac. For it was doubtless on that occasion that Abraham was enabled to foresee, and, in some measure, also to understand, the manner in which the promised Seed would become “a blessing to all nations,” by dying for them. And that sacrifice of Isaac, when considered in connection with the predictions of that Seed, who was to descend from Isaac, ‘was a key to the sacrifices even of the law itself.’

Thus did Jesus appeal to the law, of which he declared, when he repeated on another occasion some of the words of our text^e ; “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.” We have already noticed in some measure how he appealed to the prophets. But he appealed to them much more largely than the limits of this discourse will allow us fully to lay before you. One other detached example we shall notice, and

^c Luke xxii. 15, 16. ἕως ὅτου πληρωθῇ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ.—Exod. xii. and xiii.

^d John viii. 52—56. Gen. xxii.

^e Luke xvi. 16, 17.

we shall then briefly class the principal remaining instances under two general heads.

Jesus was frequently addressed by the title of “the Son of David,” nor did he decline it; although it is evident that they conceived that title as synonymous with the title “Messiah the Prince;” and indeed the prophets authorized them so to do. But they doubtless understood by it the heir of David’s earthly throne; and therefore our Lord undertook to shew them, that David had himself spoken of him in such a manner, as to shew that the expected Potentate was not such, either as to his original, his character, or the nature of his dominion, as they fondly supposed. “Jesus asked the Pharisees, What think ye of the Christ? whose Son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in Spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son? And no man was able to answer him a word.” This was indeed not the only difficulty which the same hundred and tenth Psalm, which is so often cited in the New Testament, would present to the Pharisees. For it spoke in figurative language of the *sufferings* of the Son of David as *prior* and *introductory* to his exaltation; and described him also as “a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec, and

as therefore being, as Zechariah also had predicted, “a priest upon his throne^a.”

I. One of the subjects, just alluded to, upon which our Lord very frequently, though not always avowedly, cites the prophecies of the Old Testament, is the *infidelity* of that generation, and the consequences of it in the *persecution* of those who *believed*, and in the *vengeance* which overtook those who disbelieved, because “they knew not the time of their visitation.” “In them, said our Lord, is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them^b.” This passage is also cited by the Evangelist St. John, when speaking of the unbelief of the Jews, “although Jesus had done so many miracles before them.” And our Lord, when speaking of the same subject, observed, “This cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their

^a Ps. cx. Matt. xxii. 41—46. Mark xii. 34—37. Luke xx. 40—44. Zech. vi. 13.

^b Matt. xiii. 14, 15. Isai. vi. 9, 10.—See also Jer. v. 20—23.

law, They hated me without a cause^a." For he "had done among them the works which no other man did."—And again, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me^b." And the next verse of that prophet contains a threatening, to which our Lord seems also to have alluded, when he said; "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes^c."

When our Lord says, "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household," he adopts the language of the prophet Micah^d. And it will also be found that he has very largely cited the ancient prophets in many of his statements respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, of which indeed he expressly says, "For these be the days of vengeance, that *all things which are written may be fulfilled*^e." And it is scarcely needful to re-

^a John xv. 22—25. Ps. xxxv. 19; lxix. 4.

^b Matt. xv. 7. Mark vii. 6. Isai. xxix. 13. Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

^c Matt. xi. 25. Our Lord had just been speaking of his miracles. See ver. 18. of the same chapter of the Prophet. Compare also Isai. xxxii. 4; xlv. 18; liv. 13.

^d Matt. x. 35, 36. Micah vii. 6, 7.

^e Luke xxi. 22. Deut. xviii. 19; xxviii. 15—68. Dan. ix. 24—27. Zech. xi. and xii. Mal. iii. and iv.

mind you of the awful words which he subjoined to the parable of the wicked husbandmen, to whom one messenger was in vain sent after another to receive the fruits of the vineyard^f, until the owner “last of all sent unto them his Son.” “Did ye never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the head of the corner?’ *Whoso* shall fall on that stone shall be broken; but on *whomsoever* it shall fall, it will grind him to powder^g.” And when he added, on that occasion, that “the kingdom of God, which was taken from them, would be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,” he doubtless alluded to the approaching call of the Gentiles, which in several other instances he had even more distinctly predicted, in strict conformity to what the prophets had stated respecting those who would be included in the Messiah’s kingdom^h.

II. But lastly, Jesus also referred, before his sufferings commenced, to the prophetic testimony

^f See 2 Chron. xxiv. 19—21; xxxvi. 15, 16. Neh. ix. 26. Jer. xxvi. 4—6.

^g Ps. cxviii. 22. For the sources, whence our Lord borrowed the *general* warning subjoined to his citation of the Psalmist, see Isai. viii. 14, 15. lx. 11, 12. Zech. xii. 2, 3. Dan. ii. 34, 35.

^h Matt. viii. 11, 12. John x. 16. Gen. xxii. 18. Ps. lxxii. 10, 11, 17—19. Isai. xi. 10; xlii. 1—6. Zech. ii. 11; viii. 22, 23. Mal. i. 11.

of the Old Testament respecting them, and the events by which they were to be brought about. At the same time, however, by additional and still more minute statements, he made them the subjects of his own original and more express predictions. “Behold,” said he to the twelve, “we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are *written by the prophets* concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.—The Son of man goeth, *as it is written of him*, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.—I speak not of you all, I know whom I have chosen, but *that the Scripture* may be fulfilled, ‘He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.’—All ye shall be offended because of me this night, for *it is written*, ‘I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.’ He that hath a purse, let him take it, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one; for I say unto you, that *this that is written* must yet be accomplished in me, ‘And he was numbered among the transgressors;’ for the things concerning me have an end^a.”

Such things had he said to his disciples, before there was yet any apparent fulfilment of the things which he had thus predicted. — When

^a Luke xviii. 31. Matt. xxvi. 24. John xiii. 18, 19. Matt. xxvi. 31. Luke xxii. 36, 37.

those who came to apprehend him in the garden of Gethsemane were approaching ; he endeavoured to awaken their recollection of these previous assurances, and to arouse them to a sense of his and their danger by the declaration, “ He that betrayeth me is at hand.” And when they were astonished and confounded, he reminded them once more that nothing had occurred, which had not been prophesied respecting him, nothing, from which his Father, if it were expedient, could not deliver him. “ Thinkest thou,” said he to Peter, “ that I cannot now pray unto my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall *the Scriptures* be fulfilled, that *thus it must be*^b ?” He noticed the same to those who came to apprehend him. “ All this has been done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.—The Scriptures must be fulfilled.—This is your hour, and the power of darkness^c.”

When on his trial, he professed himself to be the Christ, he cited the prophecy of Daniel, respecting the Son of man, and argued respecting the nature and object of his kingdom.—But these things will be considered in a future Lecture.

^b Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

^c Matt. xxvi. 56. Mark xiv. 49. Luke xxii. 53.

When suspended on the cross, “knowing that ALL THINGS WERE NOW ACCOMPLISHED, *that the Scripture might be fulfilled*, he said, I thirst^a.” And “being numbered with the transgressors, and having made intercession for them,” he vented the feelings of his agonized soul in the opening verse of that Psalm, which had so distinctly predicted those sufferings which he had now been enduring, the minute circumstances which had attended them, and the cruel taunts which his enemies had unwittingly uttered against him^b.” And soon, appealing both to the law, and to the prophets, which had prophesied of all these things, and which were now accomplished, he declared with a loud voice, “IT IS FINISHED^c.” He “bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”

To these words, and to all those which we have cited, may we not apply the exhortation of our text? “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” We have not even alluded to more than an extract from the great volume of Prophecy. We have noticed those predictions only, which we know that our Lord actually cited, and to which he appealed, and even these but in an imperfect and cursory manner. But do not even these shew to us, that “the law and the prophets

^a John xix. 28. Ps. lxix, 21. ^b Ps. xxii. Matt. xxvii. 46.

^c John xix. 30.

prophesied" of HIM? He, therefore, "that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Let us hear "the voices of the prophets," directing us to Jesus as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And let us hear also the voice of HIM, who says, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." And "to whom else should we go? for he hath the words of eternal life." Yet, how "slow of heart are we also to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" How careless about that salvation, "of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, who did but *prophecy* of the grace that *has come* unto us!" To them "it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister these things; which are now reported *to us* by them, that have preached the Gospel unto us, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." "Blessed, then, are our eyes, because of the things which we have seen, and our ears, because of the things which we have heard. For many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which we see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which we hear, and have not heard them."

"He, therefore, that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

LECTURE XIV.

OUR LORD'S DEBATES WITH THE JEWS.—THAT RECORDED IN ST. JOHN'S EIGHTH CHAPTER CONSIDERED—IN THE COURSE OF WHICH OUR LORD SPECIFIES THE PERIOD AT WHICH THE EVIDENCE OF HIS MESSIAHSHIP WOULD BE COMPLETE; APPEALS TO THE PURITY OF HIS LIFE, AND OF HIS DOCTRINE; HINTS AT THE FULFILMENT IN HIM OF THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM; AND ASSERTS HIS PRE-EXISTENCE.

St. JOHN VIII. 28, 29, 45—47.

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

THE arguments of our Lord before the Sanhedrim having been considered in our former Lectures, and also such other arguments as were immediately referable to the *same* general heads, we shall proceed, in this and the three following Lectures, to discuss such as remain unnoticed.

The subject of our next Lecture will be, our Lord's reference to his own prophecies as furnishing an evidence of his character. We shall afterwards notice his sayings at his apprehension, at his trial, and at his crucifixion. And our review of his statements on the subject of evidence will then be completed, by considering the manner in which he proved the reality of his resurrection, and his reasonings upon the prophecies after that event.—Our attention will be directed, in this Lecture, to the *debates* which our Lord held with the Jews at an advanced period of his ministry. They are recorded in the sixth and following chapters of St. John ; and we have selected, as a specimen, that which occupies a large portion of the eighth chapter. We find in this debate the same kind of instruction, argument, and expostulation as in the others. And in the words of our text, which are extracted from it, three distinct heads of evidence are noticed, which we have not yet considered in the same point of view, and in the same connection ; viz., his death as supplying the complete and convincing demonstration of his character ; and the purity of his life, and of his doctrine, as also claiming the confidence of all candid and devout inquirers. Our Lord concluded the debate with a significant intimation, that in him was accomplished the promise made to Abraham.

And as he had, on other occasions, advanced a claim to divinity, had reasoned upon it, and had given evidence of it, so he here repeated the same claim, by the declaration of his existence before Abraham. These various topics must be noticed in a very brief and cursory manner. But it is observable, that in these debates, as well as in those set discourses, to which the subject of these Lectures had led us to advert, our Lord ever combined with the statement of evidence, declarations respecting the character and design of his mission, and forcible addresses to the conscience of his hearers.

It will be expedient, with reference to the first topic which will offer itself, to renew our recollection of the state of opinion, which existed among the Jews at Jerusalem at the time when this debate took place^a.

For some time after the cure of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, and his arraignment before the Sanhedrim in consequence of it, "Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him," offended by his supposed disregard of the sabbath, and still more, because "he called God his own proper Father, making himself equal with God." His brethren in Galilee were anxious that he should

^a See John, chapters vi. and vii.

go into Judea at the approaching feast of tabernacles, and "shew himself to the world." Jesus declined for a time ; stating that "the world hated him, because he testified concerning it, that the works thereof are evil." About the midst of the feast, however, "Jesus went up into the temple, and taught." There had previously been "much murmuring among the people concerning him ; for some said, He is a good man ; others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people." They were however astonished that, "having never learned," he was able to deliver such instructions ; and were, therefore, not a little divided in their opinions respecting him. Jesus himself in several instances adapted his remarks to their own difficulties and objections ; and, more than once, alluded to their murderous wishes against him. "Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill ? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is ; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." Upon his repetition of the supposed blasphemy, in noticing these their doubts, "they sought to take him." But "many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man doeth ?" And on the last day of the feast, after Jesus had spoken, under

the metaphor of water, of the future gifts of the Spirit, “many of the people when they heard that saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.” Even these officers of the chief priests gave this reason for not bringing him, “Never man spake like this man.”

Thus deeply had the people been impressed in favour of Jesus by his miracles and doctrine. Nay, so strongly were they disposed even to confess him to be the Christ, that the Pharisees, as we read in the following chapter, at this time deemed it necessary to denounce the penalty of excommunication from the synagogue, against all who made such a confession. Yet even the doubts which they entertained proceeded upon erroneous suppositions. And Jesus, as we shall see, at this season endeavoured to assist their inquiries, and to strengthen and direct their faith, at the same time that he avoided every thing that might encourage the carnal and worldly views of such, as dreamt only of the restoration of a temporal kingdom to Israel.

“*Early in the morning,*” on the day after the feast of tabernacles, “he went into the temple, and all the people came unto him^a.” Borrowing an illustration from the rising sun, and thereby also applying to himself several prophetic descriptions of “the Redeemer who should come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob,” he said, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life^b.”—A discussion arose in consequence of this declaration; in the course of which Jesus stated, in answer to the objection of the Pharisees, that even his record concerning himself was true, “because he knew whence he himself came, and whither he went.” And he also reminded them that “the Father had borne witness of him,” as well as he himself by his miracles.—But we need not dwell upon this part of the discussion, as we have already had occasion to consider it^c.

“Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come^d.”—When they cavilled at him, as if he had spoken of an intention to kill himself, he reproved them be-

^a John viii. 12—20.

^b Isai. lix. 20, 21; lx. 1.

^c See the former part of Lecture VI, and Lecture XI.

^d John viii. 21, &c.

cause of the earthliness of their minds, which not only made them indulge the hope of a temporal Messiah, but also seemed to incapacitate them for learning better things. “Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”—Our Lord was evidently now conversing with some of those, who were disposed to side against him; and he was kindly cautioning them against persisting in those interested and deluding prejudices, which now so effectually blinded their understandings. Had they but had a disposition to judge impartially, or even to suspend their judgment, they would, at the period to which he alluded, when he said, “I go my way,” have seen fully that he was the Messiah that was to come, though not such as they expected. But he foresaw that they would, unhappily for themselves, cling to the fond hope of a Messiah triumphant upon earth, while they rejected him who was indeed the Messiah, but who had then “ascended where he was before^a,” and “gone whither they could not come.” The promised Messiah would have gone his way; they would still seek him; and in the agony of disappointed hope, and amidst the destruction which

^a John vi. 62.

threatened them, would die in their sins. Because of their inveterate carnal prejudices, would they die in their sins ; “ for if ye believe not that I am he”—I, who appear in humility, in righteousness, in the character of a prophet and divine instructor, not of a warrior and monarch—“ if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” Whether Jesus were proved to be the Messiah or not, he had already given them such proofs that “ God was with him,” that he had the full sanction of heaven to demand of them a confidence in such a declaration as he now made ; and the awful alternative which he announced to them, might justly dispose them to inquire, as they immediately did, “ Who art thou ?”—Jesus saith unto them, “ Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning^b.” He had already made many declarations respecting himself. At Jerusalem at a preceding passover he had publicly, before the Sanhedrim, stated to them the authority which as the Son of man he had received of the Father. During the feast of tabernacles, which was just over, he had not been backward in speaking of his doctrine, of the source from whence he derived it, and of the blessings which he would be empowered to bestow on all that believed on him. On that very morning, in the beginning of this conver-

^b See Note in page 319.

sation with them, he had declared himself to be “the light of the world.” But he proceeded to inform them that he had not yet fully declared either his own office, or their responsibility ; but that, at a certain *period*, and after a certain *event*, they would have the whole matter before them ; and such complete evidence would then be proposed to them, as would make their unbelief no longer excusable.” “‘I have many things to say and to judge of you ; but he that sent me is true ; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.’ They understood not that he spake unto them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them ; When ye have *lifted up the Son of man*, then shall ye *know that I am he*, and that I do nothing of myself ; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that hath sent me is with me ; the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things that please him.’”

The Evangelist adds, that “as he spake these words, many believed on him.” They were probably impressed with an admiration of his fearless declaration of his doctrine in the midst of danger ; they recollected both his former and his recent instructions, and they could not but confess their truth and propriety ; they felt an assurance, justified by the past wonders which had borne witness to Jesus, that the future instruction and evidence

of which he spoke would hereafter be afforded them ; and that “ what they knew not now, they should know hereafter.” Perhaps they did not understand what he meant by “ the lifting up of the Son of man.” They might even still understand this as spoken of his exaltation to the temporal throne of David, rather than of his being “ lifted up from the earth” upon the fatal tree. Probably, however, they had some imperfect notion of his meaning ; for we find them afterwards observing, upon his use of the same expression, “ We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever ; and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? Who is this Son of man^a ?” Jesus did not, even then, explain it ; for the event, which so speedily followed, could alone properly explain it. But he then added a caution, which might also have suited the occasion and connexion of the words before us, if the question had been at that time proposed to him, “ Yet a little while the light is with you ; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.—While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”

As far as it respects the full understanding of this difficulty, of the way in which the Son of man was lifted up, and of all the glorious consequences

^a John xii. 34.

of that great but awful event,—to this extent, we are all “children of light.” We know how Jesus died, and rose again; how he thereby fulfilled what was written, and was declared to be the Son of God with power. Hereafter we shall have to consider this more at large; let it suffice for the present to have observed, that Jesus previously specified this event as *completing the evidence of his mission*. Yet during his personal ministry “he that sent him was with him, the Father left him not alone.” Even before the Sun of Righteousness arose upon the earth in all the brightness of his meridian splendour, those who waited for his salvation, saw the brightness and felt the genial warmth of those healing beams, which gave full assurance that the light of Israel was come, and which prepared them to expect the glory that should follow. But to us are made known both the wonders of his holy and spotless life, the heavenly doctrine that flowed from his lips, the miracles which he wrought, the witness of heaven and of earth, of Prophets and Apostles, of holy men and holy Angels. And in whom have we therefore believed, but in Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant; in Jesus, of whom all these things “were written, that we might know that he is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we might” not die in our sins, but “have life through his name.” To us, therefore, who have

known and received all these things, as well as to those who “believed on him, as he spake the words” which we have been considering, Jesus says ; “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

That in these words he spoke of that slavery of sin, which is unto death, and of that spiritual liberty wherewith he maketh his people free, we learn from his own subsequent explanation of his words. In us there are probably few prepossessions so likely to frustrate his gracious intentions for our deliverance, as those which result from the debasing influence of that our slavery, which makes us in love with our fetters, which causes us even gladly to remain in the darkness of our prison-house, and which disposes us to hear with apathy, if not with regret, the words of him who “says to the prisoners, Go forth ; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves^a.” But whatever be the nature, and however domineering be the influence of the unhappy principles, which make us reluctant to be liberated from that service, of which “the wages is death,” by the Son, “who can make us free indeed,” we shall do well to reflect how severely Jesus reproved and expostulated with those Jews, to whom these words appeared

^a Isai. xlii. 7.

to suggest, not, as to a Christian, a salutary and yet encouraging admonition, but an attack on the supposed hereditary and indefeisible prerogatives of the children of Abraham. If *they* were culpable for their ignorance and neglect of this freedom, how much more so are *we*!

Forgetful of the *national* dependence on a foreign power to which they then were, and had been so often before, subject ; forgetful, also, that as little could they boast of uninterrupted *religious* liberty, the Jews answered Jesus with the words, “ We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man ; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free ? ” — “ Verily, verily, answered Jesus, I say unto you, He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever ; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham’s seed ; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father ; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.” They were right in supposing that Jesus intended to impute criminality both to themselves and to their father ; and they repeated the assertion, that “ Abraham was their father,” as if to ask, whether he meant to apply such an imputation to him. But if Abraham were pure from guilt, it did not follow that they

were his children in that respect, and that they inherited his integrity. Jesus disproved their claim, acquitted Abraham, and advanced his position against them in nearly the same words as before. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father." They had no resemblance to Abraham in that very particular, for which he was especially commended; for "Abraham believed in the LORD, and he counted it to him for righteousness^a." But still, what could Jesus mean by "their father," if he meant not Abraham? Did he mean to accuse them of idolatry, termed by the prophets *fornication*, as being a breach of that covenant of God with his people, which was described under the similitude of a marriage^b? "We be not born of fornication;" they replied; "We have one Father, even God." Still had they not been aware of whom Jesus spake. He had to refute another of their unauthorized claims. He had to prove to them, that idolatry was not the only modification of error. He had to reveal to them the humiliating

^a Gen. xv. 6.

^b 2 Chron. xxi. 11. Jer. iii. 1—14. Ezek. xliii. 7—9. Hos. ii. 19, 20; iv. 12.

truth, which referred their original, in a spiritual sense, to another and more ancient progenitor than Abraham; to one, however, who had been described in their own Scriptures; and their relation to whom fully accounted for their opposition to himself, if he were what he *claimed*, and what *he knew* himself to be.

“ Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth, and came (am come^a) from God; neither came I (have I come) of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech (i. e. my *phraseology*)? even because ye cannot hear my word (i. e. the *truths* which I declare). Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye are willing to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”

^a ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξηλθον καὶ ἤκω· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀπ’ ἐμαντοῦ ἐλήλυθα, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνός με ἀπέστειλε. Διατί τὴν ΛΑΛΙΑΝ τὴν ἐμὴν οὐ γινώσκετε; ὅτι οὐ δύνασθε ἀκούειν τὸν ΛΟΓΟΝ τὸν ἐμόν.
v. 42, 43.

This is a most important passage. That the devil “was a murderer from the beginning, that he abode not in the truth, and that he is the father of lies,” the very first pages of Revelation inform us. God had said, that if man eat of the forbidden fruit, “he should surely die.” “The old serpent, which is the devil and Satan,” said, “Ye shall not surely die.” The lie was believed. Man disobeyed, and the sentence of death was pronounced. A declaration was at the same time made by the Almighty, that “he would put enmity between the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman.” The Jews identified themselves with the seed of the serpent, by seeking to kill him, “who told them the truth which he had heard of God.” They proved themselves to be “children of the devil,” not only by being thus “willing to do the lusts of their father,” but by disbelieving Jesus, “because he told them the truth.” For they were “of the world;” and he “testified, that the world’s works were evil,” and therefore they “hated him, and could not hear his word.” “If he told them the truth,” and that he did, the conscience of every one who has either heard or read the words of Jesus must testify, why did they not believe him, but “because they were not of God.” For “he that is of God will hear his words.” And if they were of God, they would not have hated, but on the contrary have loved him, who had by so many proofs evinced that he

“proceeded forth, and was sent, and had come from God, and not of himself.”

These declarations he fearlessly and confidently advanced respecting himself. He feared not that they should retort the charge; for he feared not to assert that “he did always those things that pleased the Father.” Nay, he even anticipated and defied their objections in this matter, by the challenge, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” Full well, indeed, he knew that they would proceed in co-operation with their father. The time was at hand, which would be “their hour, and the power of darkness;” in which they would accomplish their murderous purpose, and accomplish his death. But it would be “with wicked hands” that they would “crucify and slay him;” and both in his life, and in his death, did both they and their father fail to “convict him of sin.” They could never bring any charge against him, excepting as it regarded his supposed violation of the sabbath, and his supposed blasphemy, in calling himself the Son of God^a. Both these he

^a For the defence which our Saviour made, both by argument and miracle, against these imputations, see Lecture V. and the conclusion of the present Lecture.—The comprehensive character of the debate, which is the subject of this Lecture, has rendered it necessary to consider the appeal of our Lord to the purity of his *life* and *doctrine*, only in immediate connexion with the course of the discussion. A more *general* view of both those topics has, indeed, been before taken in the latter part of Lecture VI.

ever refuted by unanswerable arguments ; and at the same time he demonstrated by his miracles, that “ the Father did not leave him alone,” and, therefore, that always, and in all these things, he did “ those things that pleased him.” Satan had already been vanquished in his early attacks upon our Lord’s faithfulness and integrity ; and when “ the prince of this world came” unto him at the closing scene, he “ found nothing in Jesus,” and was himself “ cast out.” Nay more, their present rivalry and opposition would issue in that decisive conflict, described in the original prediction of the enmity which would subsist between “ the Seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent.” This was he, whose “ heel was indeed bruised,” but who “ bruised the head of the serpent ;” who thereby “ destroyed him that had the power of death,” and obtained that victory, by which the forfeited immortality was restored, and eternal life procured for all that obey him. And Jesus *on this very same occasion*, gave that promise of eternal life, which he was so soon to be empowered to perform ; thereby predicting the speedy accomplishment of the *original* promise, as he also immediately afterwards asserted the accomplishment of that *given to Abraham*.

His opponents contended, that by these imputations he manifested such hostility to the Jews, that he might justly be considered as siding with

the enemies of their country and religion, and could scarcely be otherwise than infatuated. "They answered and said unto him, Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Not long before, in his discourse before the Sanhedrim, he had advanced a similar statement in the most confident and solemn manner. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life^a." He now repeated the same declaration in a connexion still more striking, and in one which more particularly explained its meaning. For a comparison of his expressions in the *earlier* part of this debate, and of those *immediately preceding* the declaration in question, will shew, that he claimed, and in the strongest manner asserted his possession of the power to deliver those, who were the bondslaves of sin and Satan, not only from the present dominion, but also from the future condemnation, of sin. But the Jews, staggered still more than ever at such a statement, demanded of him, "Art thou

^a John v. 24.

greater than our father Abraham, which is dead, and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?" He concluded a defence, similar to that which we have just cited^b, with the words, "Your father Abraham, eagerly desired that he might see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." Whom therefore did Jesus profess himself to be, but that predicted Seed of Abraham, "in whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed?" For whose day but his, could Abraham ever have desired to see? And then, doubtless, did he see it, when the typical sacrifice of Isaac was offered on mount Moriah, and when the substitution of the ram in the place of Abraham's son was followed by a more particular repetition of the promise. And all nations have been blessed by the actual sacrifice of him, whom Isaac typified; who, "after he had been lifted up, was known to be he," of whom "the law and the prophets prophesied," and who thenceforth "drew all men to him^c," as the Shiloh whom Jacob had predicted.

^b "Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father which honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God. Yet ye have not known him: and if I should say, I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you; but I know him, and keep his saying.—Your father Abraham eagerly desired that he might see my day (*ἠγαλλιάσατο ἵνα ἴδῃ τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμὴν*); and he saw it, and was glad." ver. 54—56.

^c See Gen. xlix. 10. "To him shall the gathering of the people be." E. T. *Ὁνκ ἐκλείψει ἄρχων ἐξ Ἰουδα—ἕως εἰάν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ· καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκία ἐθνῶν.* Septuagint.

But the Jews misunderstanding or perverting what Jesus had said, asked him, not whether Abraham had really "*seen his day*," but whether "*he*, not being yet fifty years old, *had seen Abraham*." Jesus did not shrink even from meeting this new state of the question, which demanded an answer respecting his *pre-existence*. He unequivocally answered "Before Abraham was, I am."

On many other occasions had Jesus virtually affirmed the same position. His divinity, if he did really and justly claim it, certainly implied his pre-existence. And he frequently used language from which the Jews inferred, that he made himself "equal with God," nor did he disavow the claim. When the Pharisees asked, "Who can *forgive sins*, but *God alone*?" he cured the paralytic, for the express purpose of proving that "the Son of man *had power on earth to forgive sins*^a." He spoke of the Son of man "*ascending up where he was before*," to prove that he said truly, "*I came down from heaven*^b." He appealed to prophecy to prove that he, who was David's Son, was also David's Lord^c. He appealed, on another occasion, both to the *Scriptures* of the Old Testament as *justifying*, and to his

^a Matt. ix. 6. ^b Mark ii. 10. Luke v. 24.

^b John vi. 42, 61, 62.

^c Matt. xxii. 42—45.

own *works* as *proving*, his claim to divinity. “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, *believe the works*, that ye may *know*, and *believe*, that *the Father is in me, and I in him*^d.” He again appealed to his works in proof of the assertion that he ought to be believed in such declarations, when he said to Philip, “He, that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself, but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe *me*, that *I am in the Father*, and *the Father in me*; or else believe me for the very *works’ sake*^e.”

Thus does it appear, that Jesus supported by the most cogent argumentation, and by diversified evidence, every claim which he advanced. This very circumstance itself, that he thus founded his religion *on argument*, the truth also and the purity of his *doctrine*, the unimpeachable purity and

^d John x. 29—39.^e Ibid. xiv. 6—11.

disinterestedness of *his own life*, the accomplishment of every *type* and *prophecy* in the events and purposes of his mission, and the many and various attestations of a *miraculous* nature which evinced its divine authority,—all these considerations may justly demand “the obedience of our faith.” And having now considered at length this debate of our Lord with the Jews, let me briefly direct your attention to the circumstances under which it was concluded.

Jesus delivered himself by a miracle from the effects of that indignation, which the assertion of his pre-existence had excited. “They took up stones to cast at him ; but he was concealed from them, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by^a.”—But remark also what followed.—“*As Jesus passed by*, he saw a man which was blind from his birth^b.” He restored to him his sight ; and the severest scrutiny of the perplexed rulers, only proved the reality of the miracle, and that it had been wrought by Jesus. Shall *we* then consent to the declaration, of the Pharisees, that “we know not whence Jesus is?” Rather let every such thought give way to the force of that rational expostulation of the man, on whom this signal miracle was wrought. “Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know

^a John viii. 59. — Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐκρύβη, καὶ, &c.

^b Ibid. ix. 1.

not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind. *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing^d.*” When Jesus declared to this candid, and reflecting man, that he was the Son of God, he answered, “Lord, I believe,” and worshipped him^e. Jesus also declared, at the commencement of the debate which we have been reviewing, that he is “the light of the world.” And he avowedly wrought this very miracle to demonstrate the truth of that assertion. For, immediately before he wrought it, he assigned to his disciples his reason for so doing. “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, *I am the light of the world^f.*”—We may know then the blessedness to which we are invited; for Jesus himself declared, “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life^g.” But hear also the condemnation of those, who persist in unbelief; for this also our Lord declared after the miracle. “For judgment am I come into this world, that

^d John ix. 30—33.

^e Ibid. 35—38.

^f Ibid. 4, 5.


^g Ibid. viii. 12.

they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind^a.”

Sensible, then, of our necessities, and touched with gratitude to him, who hath visited, enlightened, and redeemed us, let us “walk in the light of the Lord ;” let us not shrink and retire from it, even though it discovers to us our sinfulness and guilt, our responsibility and danger. Let us not disbelieve Jesus “because he tells us the truth.” When it is demanded of us, “Dost thou believe in the Son of God?” *we* can now have no plea to offer in excuse for that ignorance, which would lead us to say, as the man who was cured of his blindness said, “Lord, who is he, that I might believe on him?” Let us then answer with him, “Lord, I believe.”—He worshipped Jesus. And we must also “honour the Son even as we honour the Father.”—Jesus hath also declared that “whoso keepeth his saying, shall never see death, but shall have the light of life.” He has “visited us, as the day-spring from on high, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” And oh! that “the things, which belong to our peace, may never be hid from our eyes ;” that “the God of this world, who blindeth the minds of them that believe not, may not prevent the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, from shining

^a John ix. 39.

unto us." Such alas ! has been, and is, and may again be the case with many. Many of those, who saw this signal miracle, scrutinized it, perceived its reality, and yet disregarded its force and intention. And even now "the true light, which cometh into the world to enlighten every man, shineth in the world's darkness," and even enters into the dark chambers of our own souls, and yet we see it not, we comprehend it not, we are not guided by it. Yet "our light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us." Let us then "arise," and, "though we were sometime darkness, let us be light in the Lord ;" and "let our light shine before men, to the glory of our heavenly Father, by our good works which they shall behold." For dreadful and hopeless is the state of those, "who say they see, and whose sin therefore remaineth ;" "who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." May, therefore, that "God, which commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ; so that we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."



LECTURE XV.

OUR LORD'S STATEMENT THAT THE FULFILMENT OF HIS OWN PREDICTIONS WOULD EVINCE HIS MESSIAHSHIP. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE DISPLAYED AND NOTICED HIS UNLIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF MEN AND THINGS.

St. JOHN XIII. 18, 19.

I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.

IT was asserted by our Lord of John the Baptist, that "there had not arisen a greater prophet than he;" nay that he was "even more than a prophet." And the reason which he assigned for such an assertion was this, that John was the very "messenger of whom it was written, that he should be sent to prepare the way of the Lord." "He came for a witness" to that dignified Person to whom all the prophets had referred; and his predictions were, in many respects, more minute and particular than those of his predecessors. "He came for a wit-

ness," not by his verbal annunciations alone, but by his personal, and therefore more definite testimony to him "whom God had sent."

Now in all these particulars Jesus as far surpassed his forerunner, as the immediate forerunner did the remoter prophets. Jesus was the very personage, to whom all these, "at sundry times and in divers manners," gave their inspired testimony; and in and by whom their predictions were to have their accomplishment. He carried forward the scheme of prophecy still further; describing in more precise and even in *literal* terms the great events which were approaching. He applied the language of preceding prophets to those events, so as to decide *beforehand* the true *interpretation* of their predictions. And he included, at the same time, such a distinct mention of additional particulars, as proved that futurity was much more extensively open to his view. Nay further, the events predicted were such *in themselves*, and *so circumstanced*, and Jesus also manifested such a familiar acquaintance with them, as an original prophet, that his *Messiahship* is as fully proved from hence as his *divine Mission*. And this his extensive prescience is also in another way illustrated and proved, by the knowledge which he ever displayed of past and present things, as well as of futurity; by his knowledge of the characters, surmises, and intentions of all with whom he was

concerned ; a knowledge, such as nothing less than omniscience could have communicated to him.

These considerations are pointed out to us by our Lord himself in the words of our text, with which he prefaced and prepared his distinct intimation of the treachery of Judas. He asserted his acquaintance with the characters of his disciples, although not as yet displayed by their conduct. When he spoke these words he was about to prove that “he knew whom he had chosen,” by declaring beforehand not only the treachery of Judas, but the denial of Peter, and the cowardly desertion of all of them in that hour of danger, which, though by them not foreseen, was near at hand. He cited the Scripture, which declared the hostile conduct of one “that eat bread with him,” that he might expressly apply it to one of those individuals, who then sat with him at the table. And he explained the design with which he predicted this to them, in a declaration, similar to which he made many others. “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.”—It will be our endeavour to remind you of some of the instances of this wondrous prescience of Jesus, in order that we may shew how it bears upon the question of the divine mission and Messiahship of Jesus ; and that you may thus duly apprehend the force of those arguments, which our Lord has derived from

the accuracy with which he both spoke of things to come, and discerned the spirits of men.

The predictions of Jesus extend even to the general resurrection, and to the consummation of all things. If we believe that he was what he claimed to be, we may confidently expect that all these predictions will be fulfilled in their season, although the season for the accomplishment of some of them is yet distant, and others are but imperfectly fulfilled. They are all such as it became the promised Messiah to deliver ; they are all such as it appertains to him to accomplish. And our conviction of his power and authority will indeed rest on the most solid basis, if to every other demonstration of it, we can also establish the prescience of Jesus, by shewing the fulfilment of his numerous predictions. We must for this purpose consider those which have received their accomplishment.

I. Let us first consider such as were not accomplished until after the Evangelists published a record of them in their Gospels. Such was the frequently repeated prediction of the calamities which were coming upon the Jews, and of the overthrow of their temple, and city, and nation. Jesus at one time gave only a general intimation of the sad event, or couched it under an illustrative parable^a. In other instances he concisely noticed

^a Matt. viii. 12. Luke xiii. 6, 35 ; xix. and x.

the fact, and a few of its circumstances; as in his addresses to the Pharisees^a, and in the pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem when he beheld it from the mount of Olives^b. And when the women who stood round the cross wept for him, who had so lately wept for their country, he repeated some of the alarming intimations with the expressive exhortation, “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children^c.” On each of these several occasions he distinctly pointed at the same event, but scarcely ever in the same form, and always with an allusion to some different circumstances. But in the longest of all his predictions, delivered to his disciples in private, he described the circumstances which would precede, attend, and follow that signally calamitous event, with a wonderful but awful precision. Yet “ that generation did not pass, till all was fulfilled;” and the fullest confirmation was given to the declaration of Jesus, which he connected with these predictions, “ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away^d.”

It was also declared by Jesus, that his Gospel should first be extensively preached throughout

^a Luke xvii. 20. Matt. xxiii.

^b Luke xix. 43.

^c Ibid. xxiii. 28—31.

^d Matt. xxiv. 35. Mark xiii. 31. Luke xxi. 33.

the Roman empire; that the "kingdom of God, which should be taken from the Jews, would be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;" that he must bring together "into one fold, and under one Shepherd," sheep of "other folds;" and that "many would come from the east, and from the west, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, while the children of the kingdom were cast out^e." Hereby he announced the accomplishment, in a manner which the Jews were not prepared to expect, of the divine promise given to Jacob at Bethel. "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Jacob; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed^f."

That the commission given by Jesus to "teach all nations" will one day be effectual, and that "the Gospel will be preached in the whole world," and "the fulness of the Gentiles come in," we retain the assured and consolatory hope. But as

^e Matt. xxiv. 14; xxi. 41—43. John x. 16. Matt. viii. 11. Luke xiii. 29.

^f Gen. xxviii. 13, 14.

we see not as yet “obedience to the faith among all nations,” so, *in this very circumstance*, do we recognize the prescience of Jesus, reaching to every age of that Church, of which he has declared, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it^a.” For he also announced to his disciples, that “the Jews would fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations; and that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled^b.” This prophecy has continued to receive its accomplishment for nearly two thousand years. The Jews who were then carried captive, have ever since remained, and still do remain, in the same dispersed, despised, and often persecuted condition. Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles; because the time of the Gentiles is not yet fulfilled. Yet has the Gospel of Jesus, though rejected by the Jews, and though opposed by Gentiles, not been arrested in its progress. Those who first promulgated it, did endure the various sufferings, and met with the unbelief and hatred, of which their Master forewarned them^c. But, through their labours and writings, the Gospel, like the “leaven hid in three measures of meal,” to which Jesus compared it, has ever

^a Matt. xvi. 18.

^b Luke xxi. 24.

^c Matt. x. 17, 18; xxiii. 34; xxiv. 9. John xv. 20; xvi. 2.

since continued and extended its beneficent influence in the world, and we doubt not will finally leaven the whole. Already has the “grain of mustard-seed” sown in Judea, become a tree, and many nations have reposed under its shadow, and nestled among its branches^d.

These prophecies, and their accomplishment, are of themselves sufficient to establish the prophetic character of Jesus, had he delivered no other. Their fulfilment had not begun in his own life-time, and some of the most important were not fulfilled until after the death of all those who have transmitted them to us^e. Yet their correctness is proved both by the history of past ages, and by the present state of the Christian Church, of the Jews, and of the world. It is, however, obvious, that the accomplishment of these had no share in producing that faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and that patience and tranquillity in the midst of sufferings, which the *Apostles* did undoubtedly derive from some prophecies of their Master; and the production of *both* which results he expressly assigned as his motive for the delivery of them, as we shall hereafter shew. But the notice of these may have prepared us with

^d Matt. xiii.

^e St. John, who survived the destruction of Jerusalem, and probably wrote after it, has not mentioned the prophecy respecting that event, which the earlier writers so carefully recorded.

fuller confidence to proceed to the consideration of others, the accomplishment as well as the delivery of which we learn from the New Testament, and some of which more directly tend to prove the divine mission of Jesus as the Messiah.

II. Some predictions of a *detached* character which Jesus delivered, received an almost immediate accomplishment.—Such was the declaration to his disciples, a few days before the raising of Lazarus. “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” Soon after “he said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.” To Martha also Jesus said, when he first met her, “Thy brother shall rise again;” and again at the grave, when he had ordered the stone to be removed, and she began to expostulate with him, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” The event itself also was preceded by an address to the Father, with the avowed design that they might see that it was done with his approbation and by his power, and that thus “they might believe that the Father had sent him.” And doubtless that conviction would be much strengthened by the circumstance, that he in this manner *foretold* it^a.—A similar effect would

^a John xi.

also be produced, in a more lively and impressive manner than we can conceive, when the disciples, who had been directed to go into the adjoining village, found, as Jesus had told them, “the ass tied, and the colt with her, and when the owners upon being told that the Lord had need of them, straightway sent them to him.” “His disciples understood not at first” the meaning of his entry into Jerusalem in that manner;” but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.” Here also the conviction produced by the recollection of Zechariah’s prophecy, would strikingly recal to their minds how the display of the prophetic character of Jesus himself preceded the fulfilment of Zechariah’s prediction; and that it related, though in a manner wholly distinct, to a circumstance specified by that prophet^b.—Similar remarks might be made on the foreknowledge which Jesus again exercised, when he directed the disciples where to find a place for the celebration of that passover. They found as he had said, and made ready for that last passover, at which he delivered his farewell discourses, and his intercessory prayer, so full of promise and important prophecy; at which also he instituted the perpetual memorial of his

^b Matt. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xix. John xii.

approaching death ; and immediately after which, that death, and all the other transactions which he had predicted, were hastened and accomplished ^a.—Thus do our Lord's *own predictions*, even in these *detached* instances, shed a lustre to the attestation of his own *miracles* and of *ancient prophecy* ; and some of them even strengthen the conviction produced by others.

But it is time to notice his predictions of those important events, by which his own ministry was terminated, by which the great object of his mission and office was evinced, and which fully opened the way for the display of its full evidence, and for the erection, establishment, and perpetuity of his Church. Some of these things, in a less explicit and precise manner, were foretold to the people in general ; but all of them in the most plain and circumstantial manner to those whom he had chosen.

It will suffice briefly to remind you of some of the principal predictions of this nature, which were delivered to the *people in general*.—They are concise and figurative, yet fully explained by the events which correspond to them. The earliest of them was one which referred to his death and resurrection ; and the remembrance of it by the disciples of Jesus, had an important influ-

^a Matt. xxvi. 17, &c. John xiii. 17.

ence in inducing them to “believe, not only in the *Scripture* prophecy, but also in the *word which Jesus had said*.” A sign being demanded from him as the proof of his authority, He answered, “Destroy ye this temple, and in three days I will raise it up; speaking of the temple of his body^b.”—To Nicodemus, and to his hearers on two other occasions, he spoke of the “lifting up of the Son of man;” of the *fact* and *design* of his death, under the phrase that he would “give his flesh for the life of the world;” and of the *consequences* of it in “drawing all men to him,” and of causing much success to attend his mission^c. He several times promised that “the sign of Jonah the prophet would be given to that generation;” and that “as he was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so the Son of man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth^d.”—In consequence of these, and perhaps of other still more definite predictions, the chief priests came to Pilate, to request that he would “command that the sepulchre be made sure until the *third day* ;” because, said they, “we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again^e.” Yet all these

^b John ii. 19.

^c Ibid. iii. 14; viii. 28; xii. 32; vi. 51; xii. 24.

^d Matt. xii. 39, 40; xvi. 4. Luke xi. 29, 30.

^e Matt. xxvii. 62, &c.

things were, notwithstanding, accomplished. It was even by their own "counsel and deed," that, Jesus, as he had predicted, was "cast out of the vineyard, and slain by the wicked husbandmen." And it was by their endeavour to prevent the accomplishment of his predicted resurrection, that the evidence of that event was strengthened by one of its most convincing proofs. And equally did it come to pass, that "the Son of man," as he had also predicted, "was seen to ascend up where he was before^a." In the people of that generation also was accomplished the parable of "the unclean spirit who returned, and made the last state of that man worse than the first; and Jesus had declared that so it would be to that wicked generation^b." "The stone, which they rejected, became the head of the corner^c;" "false Christs and false prophets deceived many^d;" "they sought the true Messiah in vain, and died in their sins^e;" and by the subversion of their whole polity was it brought to pass, that "neither at Gerizim, nor at Jerusalem alone, was the Father worshipped^f." For our Lord had hinted to the Jews at Nazareth, that as it had pleased God, in the time of their fathers, to send Elijah to relieve a woman of *Sidon*, and to enable Elisha to heal

^a John vi. 62.^b Matt. xii. 43—45.^c Matt. xxi. 42.^d Matt. xxiv. 24.^e John viii. 21.^f John iv. 21.

Naaman the *Syrian* leper, while the “many widows and lepers, that were then in *Israel*” were not benefited, so, in their own age, he would send the Apostles to “bring many from the east, and from the west,” to partake of the privileges of that kingdom, of which they thought themselves exclusively the children^g.

These things which Jesus himself predicted respecting “the Christ crucified,” were as unwelcome to *the twelve disciples*, as they were to their fellow-countrymen. But they were disciplined by their Master, “as they were able to bear it,” so that they were not ultimately “offended in him.” And no means did our Lord more studiously employ to secure an object, so necessary for evangelizing the world, than by detailing to them, during the time that he remained with them, all the leading particulars of those distressing transactions by which he would be removed from them; as well as that astonishing change from death to life, from humiliation to glory, from apparent weakness to divine power, which shewed that though he had first suffered many things, yet hereby “was the Son of man glorified, and God was glorified in him^h.” And the series of prophecies which Jesus delivered on these subjects, is so perspicuous and comprehen-

^g Luke iv. 25—27. Matt. viii. 11, 12. ^h John xiii. 31.

sive, that we may well conceive with what complete satisfaction the disciples in due season called to mind the words of our text, and several other similar declarations with which Jesus accompanied these predictions ; “ Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.”

No sooner had the disciples avowed to Jesus their joyful and assured confidence that he was “ the Christ, the Son of God,” than he began to prepare them for the knowledge of these events by the declaration, “ Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil^a (a false accuser) ?” And “ he began from that time to shew unto his disciples that he must go unto Jerusalem, and that the Son of man would be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the Scribes, and that they would condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him. And that the third day he would rise again^b.” And, repeating these things, he solemnly prefaced his declaration by saying, “ Let these sayings sink down into your ears^c.” These particulars are for the most part specified by the ancient prophets. But the circumstance that he should be “ *delivered to the Gentiles*,” was a prediction wholly original, and upon the completion

^a John vi. 70.

^b Matt. xvi. 21 ; xx. 18, 19.

^c Luke ix. 44.

of it depended, both the peculiar indignities which were to precede his crucifixion, and even that mode of execution itself. In one of his earlier predictions of the overthrow of Jerusalem, he noticed the *previous* occurrence of his own sufferings. "But first, said he, must the Son of man suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation^d." And "when Jesus knew that the hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father," he rendered his predictions still more demonstrative of his perfect and familiar knowledge of all things that were coming upon him, by specifying the *very day* of crucifixion. "Ye know," said he to his disciples, "that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified^e." Yet even after this prediction was delivered, the chief priests and Scribes came to a resolution, that it would not be prudent even "to take him by subtilty, and to kill him, on the feast day, lest there should be an uproar of the people." They abandoned the design; and they would not have resumed it, had not the very circumstance which Jesus himself previously mentioned, induced them to do so. "The Son of man was *betrayed* unto them; for they accepted the offer which Judas made "to deliver him unto them in the absence of the multi-

^d Luke xvii. 25.^e Matt. xxvi. 2.

tude^a.” Thus had Jesus twice predicted the treachery of Judas before he had, as it appears, even conceived the design. And a third time, when, humanly speaking, it seemed incredible, that any steps would be taken in the matter, he declared still more particularly, in the words of our text, his perfect knowledge of the respective characters, of those whom he had chosen. He was aware that one of them was then harbouring the design of betraying him, and that the Scripture would in that very way be fulfilled; because it had described one so circumstanced, as they all then were, one “who eat bread with him,” as the faithless one who would “lift up his heel against him.” Afterwards, in a very remarkable manner, he pointed out to them the *very individual*; and shewed to *him*, though the others misunderstood his words, that he was well acquainted with his purpose.

Judas, “having received the sop, went immediately out,” to “do quickly” that which he had designed and covenanted to do. “It was night;” and he therefore went to repair to “the garden, whither, as he knew, Jesus oft times resorted with his disciples.” Jesus knew that the transactions, which he had so often predicted, would now immediately take place. He therefore solemnly

^a Matt. xxvi. 14—16.

declared to the remaining eleven the importance of the crisis at which they had arrived; and during the short time that intervened, he endeavoured to prepare them for the approaching circumstances, and reminded them of some of his public intimations respecting them. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come^b.” He predicted the fears and desertion of all them that very night, and especially the actual denial of any knowledge of him by St. Peter. These events were not merely contingent upon circumstances which had occurred very suddenly, and which were as yet unknown to them, but they appeared in every respect very improbable at that time. For both Peter, and all of them, made the most solemn protestations of inviolable fidelity, even if any danger occurred. Little, indeed, had they been willing to understand his former intimations to the same effect. And they were quite incapable of so far receiving them, as to *remain* faithful to him, and to acquiesce in this sudden disappointment of their darling hopes. Yet their Master

^b John xiii. 30, &c.

proceeded in such a manner to instruct and to pray for them, and to foretel the things that were approaching, and the glory that should follow, as might *afterwards*, at least, from their recollection of his words, lead them to a right view of the design of these transactions, and of his own character, and induce them still more confidently than ever to believe in him, “because of whom they were all offended in that calamitous night.” When he foretold, in the earlier part of that evening, the treachery of Judas, he assigned that reason for his forewarning them of it; and he now conjoined with it a present proof of that his unlimited knowledge, which he had often before displayed, and which caused them now to feel, still more strongly than ever, a conviction of his divine mission, and very earnestly to declare it.

He had been interrupted in his discourse by the protestations of Peter and his companions; and, doubtless, his distinct declaration, that they would not act suitably to their late protestations, would perplex and distress them. But he wished to console, to exhort, and to inform, as well as to caution them^a. “Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. I go to prepare a place for you.” He reminded them of the evidence of his miracles in order to assure

^a See John xiv. &c.

them of the truth of these various and mysterious statements. He predicted the "greater works which would be done by those that believed on him; because," said he, "I go unto the Father." But he proceeded to predict the gift of "*another* Comforter to abide with them for ever," after his departure, "even the Spirit of truth;" by whom, after the suspension of their faith, they would be finally convinced that "he was in the Father, and the Father in him;" who would "teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them." Having exhorted them to tranquillity, conjured them not to be afraid, and assured them that his return to the Father was a fitter cause for joy than regret, he repeated his declaration, that "he told them these things before they came to pass, that, when they had come to pass, they might believe."

He then exhorted them to persevere in their obedience; and proceeded also to foretel their own sufferings, and, repeating the promise of the Comforter, declared that "he would testify of him; and that they also would testify of him, because they had been with him from the beginning." Fully to state how the Comforter, by miracles, and knowledge, and the gift of tongues,—and the Apostles, by their testimony and miracles, by their conduct and sufferings, by their reasonings

and success, testified of Jesus, would be to review the whole history of the Acts of the Apostles.

Lastly, as an immediate assurance of the truth of what he said, Jesus convinced them of his knowledge of their own thoughts, and doubts, and surmises, and availed himself of their conviction of this to repeat his prediction of future things, and also the reason why he thus foretold them. He knew that although he had so repeatedly and plainly predicted his removal from the world, and his glorification with the Father, they did not understand, what he meant by the statement, "A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." He knew that they were inquiring among themselves respecting it, that they decided that "they could not tell what he said," and that "they were desirous to ask him." He explained it unasked, telling them that he was aware of the difficulties which they had felt. And they exclaimed, as soon as he had concluded, "now are we sure that thou knowest all *things*, and needest not that any man should ask thee; *by this we believe* that thou camest forth from God.—Jesus answered them, Do ye *now believe*? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every one to his own, and ye shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These

things have I spoken to you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.”

Here let us pause. We have reviewed a vast number of predictions, which were uttered by the mouth of Jesus, and all of which we know to have been accurately fulfilled. By that fulfilment it is clearly proved to us that he was sent of God, and an original Prophet; and we may therefore justly believe all his other communications. But we have somewhat more than this evinced to us. We see that he possessed such a familiarity with all the detail of the events which he predicted, as shews that he was far superior to all preceding prophets; for they seem to have had but a very imperfect knowledge of the meaning of what they were commissioned and inspired to deliver. “When the Spirit—that was in them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, they inquired and searched diligently what or what manner of time was signified.” Now it was “the Spirit of Christ that was in them^a,” and we believe that *Jesus* was the Christ; for we have seen that he knew fully both the time, and the manner, and the object of all these transactions. He foretold them, and they were

^a 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

accurately accomplished. He foretold them, and *in him* they were accomplished. He foretold them, and they were the very things, which, at the same time that they fulfilled his predictions, fulfilled all those of the ancient prophets respecting the sufferings, and death, and resurrection of *the Christ*, and respecting the nature and establishment of *his kingdom*. He, therefore, who foretold events of such a nature, and having such consequences ; who *so* foretold them, as to prove that he was acquainted with the whole scheme of the divine counsels, and that the arrangement of the means and events by which they were accomplished, was known to him in such a manner as cannot be conceived of any other than of him, “between whom and the Father was the counsel of peace,”—he, I say, could himself be no other than “the Messiah, who was “to be cut off, but not for himself,” and who became “the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.” We may therefore ourselves derive from these predictions, a conviction such as the Apostles themselves attained thereby, in conformity to our Lord’s own declaration. “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that *I am he.*” When all these things had taken place, Jesus enforced the argument, and to the full establishment of their faith. “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet

with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." They had then seen, and they believed; and, through their word, we also may believe in Jesus as the Christ of God.

Since, then, the foreknowledge and the Messiahship of Jesus are so demonstrable, we may expect that all his other predictions will be fulfilled in their season. Those, of which the accomplishment is yet future, may exercise our confidence in the perpetuity of his Church. We may believe that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it^a." We may in hope expect the day when "the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled^b," when "the Gospel will be preached to every creature^c," when "all men will be drawn" to the standard of him, who was "lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life^d." We may pray that "his kingdom may come^e." And ere long also, "all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation^f." The Son of man will then "come in the glory of his

^a Matt. xvi. 18.

^b Luke xxi. 24.

^c Mark xvi. 15.

^d John iii. 14; xii. 32.

^e Matt. vi. 10.

^f John v. 28, 29.


Father, with his holy angels^a.” Then shall we indeed know that he is the Christ, the Holy one of God, the Saviour. May we now so believe in him, as not to be confounded before him at that day; that we may not then be “denied by him before the angels of God^b.” But rather let us now so “believe in God, and also believe in him,” that we may now partake of the consolation, and hereafter share in the accomplishment of those delightful and animating words: “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also^c.”

^a Matt. xvi. 27.^b Luke xii. 9.^c John xiv. 1—3.

LECTURE XVI.



THE REMARKABLE SAYINGS OF OUR LORD AT THE TIME OF HIS APPREHENSION, ON HIS TRIAL, AND ON THE CROSS, CONSIDERED. HIS INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS DEATH.



St. JOHN XVIII. 36, 37.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

WHEN the Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life,” he gave him charge to keep this commandment “in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, *who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession*^a.” That confession, in part at least, you

^a 1 Tim. vi. 12—14.

have heard in the words of our text. If, however, we agree with those, who so understand the words of the Apostle, as to suppose that he spoke of “the good confession which Jesus witnessed *in the days of Pontius Pilate* ^a,” we shall then conceive that the Apostle also referred to an equivalent confession which he had then just made before *the high priest*; and we shall also be reminded of the short but expressive declarations previously made, at the time of his *apprehension*, and afterwards during his *crucifixion*. We propose, in this Lecture, to take a cursory review of this series of our Lord’s sayings; for in various respects they strikingly exhibit to us the character and office of Jesus, and they will also suggest many considerations respecting the evidences of his divine mission and Messiahship, different, perhaps, from any upon which we have yet touched.

In the conclusion of our last Lecture, we noticed the farewell discourses of our Lord to his disciples, which were followed by his intercessory prayer to the Father on their behalf ^b. He then announced to them his approaching sufferings and departure; and we have now to

^a ἐνώπιον—Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ μαρτυρήσαντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν. ver. 13.

^b John xvii.

accompany them and their Master to the garden of Gethsemane, where his sufferings were to commence, and where, having prepared them, he was about to prepare *himself* for the trying scene.

Leaving the other disciples with a charge to “pray lest they should enter into temptation, and to tarry while he retired to a little distance from them to pray also,” he took with him Peter, and James, and John. Having told them of the “exceeding sorrow, even unto death,” which had come upon him, “he withdrew about a stone’s cast” from them also, leaving it in charge to them “to pray and to watch.” The words and the subject of the prayer, which, “being in an agony,” “he poured out with strong crying and tears unto his Father,” you cannot but remember^c. Nor need I remind you that his full knowledge of “the iniquity of us all, which was about to be laid on him,” and of “the stripes and chastisement which he was about to undergo for our peace and healing,” put him to grief, deep and still increasing. Returning from his more earnest supplication for “the third time,” and “strengthened by an angel from heaven,” by the annunciation, perhaps, that he “had been heard in that he feared,” he comes to arouse them to the full sense of their danger by the alarming assurance, “It is enough, the hour is come; behold

^c Matt. xxvi. 36—44. Isai. liii. Heb. v. 7.

the Son of man is betrayed into the hand of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand^a.” “While he yet spake,” Judas appeared with his company. And the contrast exhibited between the conduct of the disciples and of their Master was, if possible, more striking than ever. They acted as men; yet as those in whom an affection for their Master was deeply seated; whose hasty zeal in his behalf, and whose almost immediate fear and flight, were equally natural in their circumstances. But Jesus in his words displayed a composure, a courage, and a perseverance in the discharge of his mission, which was uniformly supported in his whole demeanour, from the first moment of danger, even until the last struggle of dissolving nature. Let us then attentively consider all that from this time fell from his lips, and also, as we have occasion to do, the intelligible significancy even of his silence.

Jesus fearlessly advanced to meet the approaching company of armed men^b. “Knowing all things that should come upon him, he went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?” When he had told them that he was the person they sought, “they went backward, and fell to the ground;” either overpowered by a consciousness of his innocence and prophetic character, or

^a Mark xiv. 41, 42.

^b John xviii. 4.

because Jesus himself exerted upon them a miraculous power. When they arose, still determined to persevere in their design, Jesus pleaded for the personal safety of his disciples only; "that the saying which he had just spoken might be fulfilled, Of those that thou gavest me, I have lost none^c." "I have told you," said he again, "that I am he; if then ye seek me, let these go their way."

Three other separate addresses he made at the same season.—When *Judas* advanced to give the signal, upon which he had agreed with the officers beforehand, Jesus intimated to him his knowledge of the plan which he had concerted, and of its object. "Friend, wherefore art thou come? *Betrayest* thou the Son of man with a kiss?" The officers, emboldened by the perseverance of their guide, laid hands on Jesus, and bound him.—And is *he* then bound, and led away as a malefactor, who is surrounded by those who professed their readiness to "go with him even unto prison, and unto death?" He, who *claimed* the peculiar co-operation and protection of his heavenly Father; who had wrought so many wonders of mercy and of power; who had "spoken as never man spake?" Is *he* now found unaided, and powerless, and silent? He is not indeed delivered. Yet he shewed, once and

^c John xviii. 9. See xvii. 12.

again, that he could even then be rescued, though by no human arm; that he could escape out of their hands, in such a manner as he had done aforetime. And he at this juncture so expressed himself, as to leave his character as a divine teacher unimpaired by these apparently humiliating incidents, and to prepare us to expect consequences from them of the highest importance, and of the deepest interest. He spoke such things both to *his own disciples*, and to *his enemies*.

His disciples eagerly inquiring whether they should smite with the sword, and Peter having actually done so, Jesus charged him to “put up again his sword into its place.” “For,” said he, “all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be^a? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it^b?”—He had before apprised them of the approaching fulfilment of prophecy by the delivery of the Son of man into the hands of sinners. They had also just heard him declare to his heavenly Father his acquiescence in his will, and his readiness to drink the cup which was

^a Matt. xxvi. 52—54.

^b John xviii. 11.

presented to him, since it was not to “pass from him, except he drank it.” They might therefore collect from his present observations that nothing had come upon him which he had not foreseen. And if, by such a destiny, Scripture was fulfilled, and the Father’s will accomplished ; and if he, who had to drink the bitter cup, was himself unmoved and resigned, and exhorted them to be so ; they might reasonably, not only so far submit, as to abstain from actual resistance, but they might also contentedly acquiesce in, and await the approaching developement of the purposes of God.

To those, who came to apprehend him, Jesus spoke in a different manner. Their present conduct was prompted by the spirit of malignant unbelief, rather than occasioned by the infirmity of human nature. With them therefore he expostulated, not at all with the design of procuring his liberation, but that he might shew them the injustice and cowardly baseness of their present procedure, and also announce to them that while they followed the suggestions of their own depravity, they would *unwittingly* be the agents for the fulfilment of Scripture. But he prefaced his words by the miraculous cure of the wounded Malchus, thereby once more demonstrating the authority of that doctrine, for which he was “an ambassador in bonds.” Having checked the too

forward zeal of his disciples, he thus addressed those who had apprehended him. “Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this has been done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled^a. This is your hour, and the power of darkness^b.”

Not far dissimilar were his remarks when, brought before the Sanhedrim, assembled in the house of Caiaphas, he stood alone, forsaken of all his disciples, and was questioned by the high priest respecting his disciples, and his doctrine. “I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou *me*? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them. Behold, *they* know what I said^c.”—The rulers knew that they could bring forward no witnesses who could give evidence upon which he might be capitally convicted. That nothing less than this would satisfy them, or answer their purpose, is evident from their former watching of Jesus, and from their consultations “how they might put him to

^a Τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν, ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν. Matt. xxvi. 55, 56.

^b Luke xxii. 53.

^c John xviii. 20, 21.

death ;” and their whole conduct both in their own court, and before Pilate, proved the same. In default of evidence, Caiaphas was desirous to draw from him some incautious expression, which, being publicly heard, might supply a pretext for his condemnation. He might hope, when he questioned him concerning his disciples, and his doctrine, to be able either to convict him of tumultuous proceedings, or of impugning the law of Moses, or of blasphemy. But this mode of procedure was as unavailing, as it was unjust. Jesus knew that even his condemnation, which was shortly to follow, would be found perfectly consistent with his innocence, and that it would even furnish many unequivocal proofs of it ; and he therefore challenged them to bring forward those who had heard him in public. He manfully and calmly maintained his ground, even when angrily smitten, by one of the officers that stood by, because he had “ so answered the high priest.” “ If,” said he, “ I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me^d ?” His answer to the high priest was perfectly just and respectful, unless it could be proved that he had taught some dangerous doctrine. He required of the officer to do so, if he could bring witness of any such. An endeavour was made by the rulers to

^d John xviii. 22, 23.

establish such an accusation, but in vain. “ False witnesses were sought,” and when at length they found them, their testimony was contradictory, and insufficient^a. They were obliged to abandon this method of prosecution.—Let it, therefore, be borne in mind, that Jesus could be convicted of no *moral* or *political* crime. He had advanced nothing in his doctrine, which calumniated or opposed the laws and institutions of Moses; he had stated nothing respecting *himself*, which he had not established by argument, and confirmed by miracles. And, in the face of such demonstration, they ventured not at this time to repeat their former imputations of blasphemy, lest, as aforetime, he should baffle their designs.—He was questioned again as to his defence of himself against these varied, though inadmissible accusations. “ The high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?—But he held his peace, and answered nothing.”—He left them to their own conviction of the insufficiency of the testimony; and would enter on no defence, when, in fact, there was no crime even apparently proved.

But the trial soon took a different turn. The high priest proposed a definite and leading ques-

^a Matt. xxvi. 59, &c. Mark xiv. 55, &c.

tion, and accompanied it with *an adjuration*; in order that Jesus, in obedience to a specific precept of Moses, might be compelled to give an answer^b. “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ.” And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.” He thus stated that he was fully aware of the manner in which they would receive his answer; yet he gave it, and said, “I am.” And that they might learn that although he hitherto appeared in humility, yet he did not disavow a claim to the glories ascribed to the Lord’s Christ, he assured them that though the time was not yet come for his exaltation, it would hereafter be known and recognized. He applied to himself the prophetic descriptions of the second and hundred and tenth Psalms, and of a passage in the book of Daniel. “Nevertheless, I say unto you, that hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” They all exclaimed in consequence of this declaration, “Art thou then the Son of God?” He said to

^b Ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος ἵνα ἡμῖν εἴπῃς, κ.τ.λ. Matt. xxvi. 63.—See the precept concerning the φωνὴ ὀρκισμοῦ in Lev. v. 1. And see also 1 Sam. xiv. 24, 26. 1 Kings ii. 42, 43; viii. 31, 32; xxii. 16. Prov. xxix. 24.—ἐὰν ὄρκου προτεθέντος ἀκούσαντες μὴ ἀναγγείλωσι. Septuagint.

them, "Ye say that I am." He assented to the justness of their supposition, that he asserted his right to that, as well as to every other dignity of the Messiah; and they all, contending that he had spoken *blasphemy* in their presence, declared that he was worthy of the capital punishment assigned to blasphemers by the law of Moses^a.

If he was not the Christ, he was justly condemned to death. If by that death itself he was not glorified, if he was not redeemed from the power of the grave, then the hopes of all that trusted in him were buried for ever with him. But assuredly he did burst through the bands, in which death for a season detained him; "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." He died in the character, the avowed character, of the Christ, the Son of God. As the Christ he died. As the Christ he is risen from the dead, and "declared thereby to be the Son of God with power." He has "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." But if he were the Lord's Anointed, he was anointed to inherit *a kingdom*. And the next question to be determined, is, what is the nature and object, and who are the subjects of his kingdom? This we shall find stated in due time by Jesus, when he was accused to Pilate by the high priest of asserting himself to be "Christ, a king^b."

^a Lev. xxiv. 16.

^b Luke xxiii. 1—3.

It was not lawful for those, who had decided that a cause of death was found in Jesus, to execute that punishment without the authority of the Roman governour; who required of course to be satisfied that the sentence was just. It was not sufficient that they assured Pilate that "if he were not a malefactor, they would not have delivered Jesus unto him^c." They were required to "take and judge him according to their law." But that would not content them, because they could not inflict that punishment which alone would satisfy them. They therefore contended that he was guilty of sedition, by assuming the title of the Christ, and therefore "making himself a king, and speaking against Cesar;" adding that he "forbad to give tribute to Cesar;" an assertion which they did not attempt to prove, and which was directly *contrary* to the truth^d. The question which Pilate had first to decide, was whether *he* really declared himself the king of the Jews; for *they* brought no witnesses to prove it. He asked Jesus whether he was so. Jesus demanded in return, "whether he asked this of himself, or whether others had told it to him?" Pilate implied that the latter was the only source whence he, a Roman, could have

^c John xviii. 29—31.

^d Luke xxiii. 2.—See Matt. xvii. 27; xxii. 21.

learnt it. “Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?” He answered in the words of our text; not merely alluding to the absence of any proof that he had done any thing which could be considered seditious, but even appealing to fact to shew the contrary; and applying that circumstance in illustration of the *nature* of the kingdom to which he advanced a claim. “My kingdom is not of this world; else would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from hence.”

There was therefore nothing which brought his claims under the cognizance of Pilate. He avowed his right to a kingdom; but not such as either had occasioned, or would occasion, any disturbance to the political order and civil government of the world. He had taught indeed the approach of a kingdom, but it was the kingdom of God; for admittance into which repentance, and the belief of promises relative to religious blessings, were requisite^a. He had taught that this kingdom “cometh not with observation,” but that it is situated in the hearts of men^b. He had avoided every thing that might encourage tumults and insurrections for his temporal exaltation^c. He had refused to act as “a judge and

^a Mark i. 15. Luke iv. 21. ^b Luke xvii. 20. ^c John vi. 15.

a divider” even among his own followers^d. He had checked and endeavoured to eradicate those anticipations of earthly grandeur, which arose in the minds, either of the multitude, or of his own disciples^e. The topics of his instruction had been the duties of morality,—the attributes of God, his promises and his will,—the evidences and spiritual purposes of his own mission. Thus had he ever taught, as they were able to bear it, that “his kingdom was not of this world;” and the same truth he now declared in “his good confession before Pontius Pilate.” In the former part of this avowal of his character, for we can scarcely call it a defence, he had declared himself to be the Christ. This he declared to *Jews*, who were qualified to judge of his claim to that title. But when arraigned before *Pilate*, he further declared, that the kingdom which belonged to him as such, was not in any sense of a political nature, and that he was not thereby rendered accountable to a *civil ruler*.

But if such were his kingdom, did he then profess himself to be a king? Pilate put this question also. And the answer of Jesus was to the same *purport* as before; but he did not now speak so much of the *nature* of the dispensation which

^d Luke xii. 14.

^e John vi. 7, 12. Matt. xvi. 17; xx. 17—28; xxii. 41—46.

he was introducing, as of the *employment* and *procedure* by which it has been *his* commission to introduce it. “ For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.” He declared that those were the subjects of his kingdom, who obeyed his commands as a teacher of moral and religious truth. In such a character he had appeared, and all his statements and labours had been suitable to it. He had been born in order to promote the establishment of a spiritual kingdom of truth and righteousness. He had gone forth into the world to fulfil the end for which he was born. He had borne witness to the truth. Those only he expected to be his followers, who were of the truth, and were, therefore, willing “ to receive the truth in the love of it.” No others would obey him, for none but they had correct apprehensions respecting the purposes of his mission. His kingdom not being of this world, he required not in his subjects any of the qualifications for the warlike or diplomatic transactions of the kingdoms of the earth. It had not been proved by his accusers that he had given any handle for such an imputation ; nor did they afterwards establish the truth of the statements, which they had so repeatedly advanced.— But Jesus thenceforth made no declaration whatever until the ground of accusation was changed ; and

not even then until an occasion was given by a remark from Pilate.

In answer to the observations of Jesus, Pilate exclaimed, "What is truth?" "Why do you speak of *truth*? What connection can that have with the accusation of the chief priests? They have brought no evidence to *support* their accusation; and it does not appear, from your professions, that you have given them any *ground* for it." He therefore went out to the accusers, who stood without Pilate's judgment-hall, "lest they should be defiled," and disqualified for the celebration of the passover. He announced to them that "he found in Jesus no fault at all," and would fain have released him, according to the usual custom at the time of the passover. But they requested the release of Barabbas, who, indeed, not only had headed an *insurrection*, but had committed murder. Determined to accomplish their purpose, they changed their plea; and, as they could convict Jesus of no political delinquency, they endeavoured to obtain the sanction of Pilate to their own previous sentence^a. "By our law," said they, "he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.—When Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid." Perhaps he was already disposed to think, from what he had now seen, and might

^a John xix. 7, &c.

formerly have heard, that Jesus was a remarkable personage; or some superstitious fears were awakened in his mind; or finding, not only that “the Jews had delivered him for envy,” but that the occasion of their enmity was connected with questions of their own religion and law, he was alarmed by the indications of an inclination to rebel, and to accuse him to Cesar, if he refused to give up Jesus to their will. He therefore asked Jesus, “Whence art thou?” But no answer was given to the Gentile ruler. The title of the *Son of God* was by the prophets ascribed to the Messiah, but it was one of which Pilate, as a Gentile, could not judge; and he had already proved to Pilate that he was clear of every charge which came under his cognizance. But when Pilate pleaded for an answer on the ground that “he had power to crucify him, and had power to release him,” then Jesus made *his final declaration* to the same purport as those made at the time of his apprehension. “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” The rulers knew, and by their recent proceedings in their own Council had in fact allowed, that the Messiah was to be the Son of God. Yet they had separated the claim to the latter character; and had condemned Jesus, regardless of his own

declaration that he was the Christ, and forgetful of all the arguments and evidences by which he had supported his divine authority. They had endeavoured upon *false* pretences to procure his condemnation by Pilate; and when they mentioned the *real* one, upon which they had themselves proceeded, they did in fact still make an improper and imperfect statement. The declaration, however, which Jesus made to Pilate, was quite consistent with his former statements to him; and, if he were the Son of God, it was evidently in character. It certainly increased the fear of Pilate, and his reluctance to condemn him; for “he sought thenceforth to release him,” and not Barabbas. But “the voice of the multitude and of the chief priests prevailed.” “He gave sentence that it should be as they required, and delivered Jesus to their will.”

Thus did the trial of Jesus proceed in such a manner, as to produce the most various and incontrovertible attestations of his complete innocence with reference to man. Occasions also arose which called forth declarations of the character in which he professed to be sent of God, viz. that he was the Christ, the Son of God, hereafter to come in power, as then he appeared in humility; and that he was born, and sent into the world that he might testify of the truth, and declare “not the wisdom of the world, nor of the princes of this world,

which come to nought," but the necessity of repentance for the remission of sins, and of obedience to his precepts in all such as were willing that he should reign over them, and who desired to enter into those mansions which he would prepare for his faithful soldiers and subjects. He declared also that the issue of his trial and condemnation not only was conformable to the predictions of the prophets, but to the will of God; and that Pilate was indeed permitted to authorize it, but that, without that permission, his power would have been ineffectual.

Connect these declarations with what we have already heard from the lips of him who made them; of him, who had appeared, at a former period of his ministry, before the tribunal of the Jewish council; and who then fully stated to them his authority and the proofs of it. And though his hour was now come, and the day of Jerusalem's visitation expiring, yet are not the words that we have this day considered, the words of one sent of God; of one who was about to "finish the work which the Father had given him to do?" Such indeed he was, though, after cruel mockeries and humiliating indignities, "he went forth bearing his cross," and touching the tenderness of the female heart with pity even to tears. He was going forth to offer himself for the life of the world. But he foresaw the obstinacy, and unbelief, and ruin of

that generation; and well might he exhort “the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for themselves, and for their children,” upon whom the guilt of that innocent blood had so thoughtlessly been imprecated and entailed^a. Well did he know, and often would he fain have taught them, the things that would have made for their peace. But now he could only pray, as they nailed him to the tree, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do^b.” Yet behold again the authority and power, and benevolence of him, who was then made “a spectacle to angels and to men.” He could confidently anticipate his Father’s acceptance of his sacrifice, and could declare to the penitent thief who attested his innocence, and prayed to be remembered in his kingdom, that “That day he should be with him in Paradise^c.” Soon did he perform the last office of filial affection to his earthly parent; and, declaring in several ways that “all things were accomplished,” he commended his Spirit into the hands of his Father, and gave up the ghost^d. The darkened heavens, and the convulsed earth, the opening graves, and the unveiled sanctuary, rebuked the madness of the agents in that scene; and declared

^a Matt. xxvii. 25. Luke xxiii. 28—31. Acts v. 28.

^b Luke xxiii. 34.

^c Luke xxiii. 39—43.

^d Matt. xxvii. 46, 50. John xix. 30. Luke xxiii. 46.

to them and to every child of Adam that hears of these transactions, that “truly this was the Son of God,” who had then “brought in an everlasting righteousness,” and finished the work which the guilt of man required, and which the mercy of God had promised.

And is not Jesus Christ, in the word of God, and by the preaching of his ministers, evidently set forth among you as *Christ crucified*? And is not an institution observed amongst us, which purports to be a *commemorative* ordinance, designed to be celebrated, even unto the end of time, wherever a Christian church exists, that Christians, “eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup, may shew forth the Lord’s death till he come?” *We* have derived the custom from our *forefathers*, who believed in Jesus Christ, and him crucified. *They* derived it from those, who first preached to them these great truths. And in what did it *originate*, in what *could* a commemorative ordinance originate, but in the fact which it commemorates? We can account for the first observance of this rite, only by believing that it is an *historical fact* that Jesus *died*. And it was observed in obedience to *his* injunctions, and in consequence of *his* celebration of it *before* he died. And how should any but an innocent person, one who knew that his innocence would be undeniably attested, institute a rite to keep up “a perpetual memory”

of his public and ignominious death? Again, why should *he wish* it to be celebrated, and why should any *others* even be *persuaded* to celebrate it, unless they discerned in the Lord's body and blood, somewhat in which they had a great concern? And what does this, and every other argument in support of the Gospel, prove to us, but that he spoke not only with foreknowledge of the fact, but with a full acquaintance with its *design*, and *success*, when he declared, "This is my body which is broken for *you*; This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for *you* and for *many* for the *remission of sins*. Do this in remembrance of ME^a."

These benefits, doubtless, will be commemorated, and be received by multitudes, even till the Lord, by whose death they were obtained, shall come again in such manner as he has declared that he will come. Our share in keeping up the remembrance of them is confined within a very brief portion of these latter times; but that portion is to us "the accepted time, and the day of salvation." We must therefore meditate on the design of this event, on the necessity for it, on the purposes accomplished by it, on the consequences of it here and hereafter. And it should be our prayer and endeavour, that "by the merits

^a Matt. xxvi. 26—29. Mark xiv. 22—26. Luke xxii. 17—22.

and death of Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all his whole church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion." If we can with heartfelt gratitude and joy "glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," and if "by it the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world," then "all things are our's, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all things are our's; for then are we Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Let us remember, however, that the cup, of which Jesus drank even the last bitter dregs, will one day be presented to our lips; and we too must drink of it. And if the draught be not sweetened, by a hope of deliverance from its deadly consequences in eternity; if we have not a well-grounded hope that the sufferings of this present time, and the pains of dissolution, will issue in the attainment of "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" then has Jesus died in vain for us, and in vain have these things been written, that "through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have a good hope" of inheriting the promises. How strong and how fatal a delusion must have come upon us, if, when death approaches, and makes us feel his presence and his power, we are in such a moment still insensible to our guilt and danger, still regardless of the judgments and of the mercies of God!

And, on the other hand, how agonizing will be our reflections, if an awakened conscience then utters her voice, and can give no other testimony than this, "Thy sins, which are many, are not forgiven thee!" Yet it is not always thus, even when the summons is most sudden and unexpected. "The righteous hath hope in his death." Death still is clad in the garb of the king of terrors, but he delivers a message of peace. He is still an enemy, but he is "the last enemy" of the Christian, and one day he will "be destroyed." Even his present hostilities have by our Redeemer been converted into blessings. By the anticipation of these we are the more readily induced to "take to ourselves the whole armour of God." "Arming ourselves with the same mind which was in him, who once suffered for us in the flesh, we cease from sin." We are no longer "subjected to bondage through the fear of death." "God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We hear from time to time how thickly the shafts of death fly around us; how one fellow-creature is cut off in his sins, another in the midst of his virtuous and useful designs; one because threescore years and ten have worn out his short-lived frame, another in the vigour of youth; one by the disorders of the body, another by some unlooked for accident. These dealings of Provi-

dence, while they answer wise ends with respect to the individuals taken away, are also intended to remind us of our own insecurity. And yet we are marvellously forgetful of so important a consideration. The soldier, indeed, in the field of battle, is heedless of the thousands that fall around him, and of the weapons which may the next moment level him with his dying comrades. But this may be accounted for. It is said that, at the first onset, a pale terror sits on every brow, and that those of the stoutest heart feel a momentary conviction of the awful situation in which they are placed. But the instant that they are engaged, this gives way to an earnestness and exertion, which leaves no time, almost no possibility, for fear and reflection. Reflection, and fear, and even the thought of death is then certain destruction. With us the case is different. We have time for reflection, and it is our security. The busiest has more than time so to "number his days, as to apply his heart unto wisdom." Why then are we as heedless as the soldier, though perhaps really in as great peril? Not because we cannot reflect—not because time has been wanting—not because it increases our danger. None of these suppositions are true in point of fact. The reason is that we are unwilling. We dread the thoughts of death, because we "love the world and the things of the world,"—because the things

unseen have little hold upon our affections—because we are sinners by nature, by practice, and almost by determination—because we “hate to be reformed”—because with the thought of death is associated the fear of “a judgment to come.” We tremble when we realize such things to our minds, and we therefore hate the recollection of them, and scarcely dare to encourage it.

It is true that such subjects are solemn, melancholy, and alarming. But are they unprofitable? Is it better to attend to them, or to dismiss them—to avoid them—to drown the remembrance of them in vanity and indulgence? Such, indeed, is the way in which the worldling acts. “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” is his law and gospel. “Let us banish care and sorrow,” is his resolution. But what says the wisest of men? “The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.*” This is at all times more satisfactory, and it has a far greater blessedness in reserve. It is more safe, for it presents fewer temptations. It is more profitable, for it shews us the value of those principles and hopes,


which in the house of feasting we may undervalue or forget. We come away from thence improved in heart, and strengthened in every holy purpose. It lies most directly in the road to heaven; and it displays to us the operation, and directs us to the acquirement of "that consolation wherewith we ourselves may be comforted of God."

But alas! Solomon did not speak as a prophet when he said, "The living will lay it to heart." He knew that too generally they would do far otherwise. At the same time he also knew, and so do we, that if the living are wise, if they are prudent, if they are not content to inherit "shame and everlasting contempt," "they will lay it to heart." We know that all men must die. But we must apply the truth to our own case. The mercies of God's providence, and the wonders of his grace, the compassion and sufficiency of a crucified Redeemer, will be worse than lost upon us, unless our hearts and consciences whisper to us daily—I too must die—I must then be ready—I must prepare to meet the Son of man—I must make him my friend—I must glory in his cross—I must have faith in his blood—I must rely upon his intercession—I must be sanctified by his Spirit—I must live a life of faith, and devotedness, and holy obedience. Nothing less than this is "to lay it to heart." Nothing less than this is "to be of the truth, and to hear the voice of Jesus."

Have you done this? are you disposed to do it? Go on in this way, and “in due season you shall reap, if you faint not.” But “be ye always ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.” “Have your loins girt, and your lights burning,” and then, “through the grave, and gate of death, you will pass to your joyful resurrection, for his merits who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our Lord^a.”

^a It may probably occur to those who read, as it did to some who heard this Lecture, that some particular circumstance must have suggested the reflections with which this Lecture concludes. On the day before it was delivered, the Author had seen removed from his own house the corpse of a Clergyman, whose useful life had suddenly been terminated in consequence of the injuries which he accidentally received on the preceding Thursday. When the Author left that which had so unexpectedly become “the house of mourning,” and sat down to finish this Lecture, the preparation of which had been suspended by that melancholy event, the recollection of the uncertainty of life, and of the blessedness of a state of preparation for death, mixed itself with all his thoughts. The contemplation of our Saviour’s death also directed his thoughts into the same channel; and perhaps it was not surprising that he should, under such circumstances, endeavour to communicate to others the lessons which himself had so profitably, and yet so painfully, been receiving. For he had witnessed the last hours of one to whom death had given a sudden summons; yet who received it with a rare and enviable composure, and submitted to the stroke in faith, and hope, and resignation. He had “adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour by his life,” and it was sufficient to support him in the hour of death.—Another exemplary Clergyman,

Clergyman, whom the Author had known from childhood, was in Cambridge when the *next* Lecture was delivered, and with him the Author conversed respecting the recent accident, of which that friend had heard on his way to Cambridge. And little did it then seem likely that he also, within eight days from that time, would be removed to another state of being. The Author cannot refrain from embracing this opportunity of bearing testimony to the steady and beneficent lustre of those truly Christian virtues, which characterised the lives of the Rev. Thomas Wilson, and the Rev. Walter Smith. Their memory will doubtless ever be embalmed in the hearts of their parishioners, and relatives, and friends ; and “ though they have been punished in the sight of men, yet was their hope full of immortality.”—The former died Oct. 12 ; the latter Oct. 29. A. D. 1821.



LECTURE XVII.

THE METHOD IN WHICH OUR LORD EVIDENCED THE REALITY OF HIS RESURRECTION, AND HIS REASONINGS ON PROPHECY AFTER THAT EVENT.—THE DISTINGUISHING PECULIARITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

St. LUKE XXIV. 44—48.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

THESE words are ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth ; to him, into whose name we were baptized, and whose religion we profess. And what are the things of which he spoke, but those indignities, and sufferings, which did indeed end in death, but which were followed by his resurrection from the dead ? He, whose words we have read, had

been apprehended, condemned, and crucified by the Jews. He had died, and he had been buried. But he now visibly appeared, and stood alive before those, who had so lately misunderstood, and denied, and forsaken him; and who, even then, scarcely had recovered from their disappointment and despondency. At this, as well as at all previous seasons, Jesus is found to be his own apologist. No sooner are the requisite data furnished, and circumstances brought into a posture, which admits an explanation and defence of his pretensions, than he proceeds to obviate the doubts and difficulties of those around him, and to draw, from familiar and acknowledged facts, the most important inferences respecting the evidence, nature, and purposes of his mission.

Whether, or not, the *resurrection* of Jesus be found to rest upon satisfactory evidence, there can at least be no hesitation, in the most sceptical mind, with respect to the reality of his *death*. If, indeed, there could be any doubt of that event, it would be mere trifling to talk of his having *risen* from the dead. But the proofs that Jesus truly died were both public and various. Not to mention the miraculous circumstances which attended the death of Jesus, and which added an awful solemnity to the conviction of its reality; would not the attention of the surrounding multitude be attracted by the loud voice

with which he cried out, "It is finished," and "commended his Spirit into the hands of the Father^a?" Even if the darkness, which until the ninth hour overspread the land, prevented some from seeing how "he bowed his head," when "he gave up the ghost;" would they not draw near, to behold the paleness of death sitting on his brow? Would not a decided conviction of the fact have been universal among "all the people that came together to that sight," ere they, "beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned^b?" What was the declaration of the centurion, "who stood over against Jesus," but a testimony to the character of one, whom he believed to be dead; occasioned indeed by his "seeing him so cry out and give up the Ghost^c?" Why did they omit to break the legs of Jesus, as they did those of the malefactors, but because they saw that he was already dead^d? The symptoms of a violent and painful death are not indeed either imitable or equivocal. But lest we should have any ground for supposing that they continued such in the case of Jesus, while he yet remained on the cross, the spear of the soldier pierced his side; and that weapon which would have produced the extinction of life, if any had

^a Matt. xxvii. 50—53. John xix. 30.

^b Luke xxiii. 44—49.

^c Matt. xxvii. 54. Mark xv. 39.

^d John xix. 31—33.

remained, gave the demonstration that life had then already departed, by the out-pouring of blood and water. Of which transaction, St. John, “who saw it, has borne record, and his record is true, and he knew that he said what was true, that we might believe^a.” When Joseph applied for permission to take down the body from the cross, he too must have had the full conviction, that it was in a state fit only for interment. Pilate, who “ marvelled if Jesus were already dead,” inquired of the centurion himself; and not until he knew it of the centurion did he give the body to Joseph^b.” And assuredly both Joseph and Nicodemus, who wound the body in linen clothes with spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury; and the women also, who sat over against the sepulchre, and beheld both where, and how the body was laid^c; all these could have no reason but to be fully satisfied that they had thus committed to the sepulchre a lifeless corpse; and, if it were otherwise, they must have discovered it. And those, who had accomplished the execution of Jesus, could have no doubt that they really had taken away the life of Jesus. For if otherwise, why did they “make the *sepulchre* sure, and seal the stone, and set a watch?” Why this precaution,

^a John xix. 34, 35.

^b Mark xv. 42—45.

^c Matt. xxvii. 59—61. Mark xv. 46, 47. Luke xxiii. 50—56. John xix. 39—42.

lest the disciples should “steal away” his dead body^d?—We can in no respect suggest a doubt as to the reality of that event, which was a subject of lamentation and despair to the friends of Jesus, and of a malignant complacency and expected triumph to his enemies. It was witnessed, and attested by the leading individuals of either party; and also by Pilate, and the centurion, and the soldiers, who were less interested in the issue.

Well might the Infidel triumph, and the Christian despair, if the *resurrection* of Jesus *from the dead* were not also ascertained by the most satisfactory evidence. Then should we have no reason to hope, as now we do, that “they which are fallen asleep in Christ have not perished;” and “we should be yet in our sins.” “Our preaching, and your faith, would alike be vain^e.” Vain also would have been the instructions and the miracles, the promises and the sufferings of Jesus. The religion, of which he had laid the foundations, would either never have been established, or long since would have fallen to decay, had not his resurrection, as the key-stone, completed, and strengthened, and adorned the whole.—But we, as the ministers of Jesus who was crucified, maintain that he “both died and rose again;” and “for this end, that he might be

^d Matt. xxvii. 62—66.

^e 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17, 18.

Lord both of the dead, and of the living.” And such was the personal character of those who were witnesses of these things to the world—they gave their testimony with such exhibitions of divine approbation—yet under circumstances which would have been so trying to those whose consistency was supported by any other principle than a conviction and a love of truth—that we need little more, to justify a reliance upon their authority, than to be satisfied that they were not, and could not have been, *deceived* into a persuasion, that Jesus “shewed himself alive after his passion by *many infallible proofs* ^a.” If we recall the train of events to our recollection, we shall be able to place ourselves in the circumstances of those, to whom the words of our text were addressed, and to ascertain both *how the resurrection of their master was evidenced to them*, and *what he taught them after that event*.

I. The chief priests and rulers of the Jews waited only for the arrival of the third day, in the hope that they should then be able finally to disabuse the people of their opinions respecting Jesus, by demonstrating the failure of the prediction that “after three days he would rise again.” His own disciples were already so completely confounded, as to have no disposition to

^a Acts i. 3.

occasion any further jealousy. They had given up all for lost; and the prediction, which had occasioned the precaution of the rulers, had left almost no trace on the minds of those, who were occupied by all the contending emotions of disappointed ambition. As far as Jesus was concerned, they, who had slept when they attended him in the garden, had now sunk into a deep mental lethargy. None of his followers were found in motion, save only a few women, who having, on the eve of the sabbath, “prepared spices and ointments, and rested the sabbath-day according to the commandment,” went early on the morning of the first day of the week to pay their last tribute of affection and respect to the remains of their entombed friend^b. Little did they think that the body, which they were desirous to embalm, would “never see corruption.” They had no opportunity to accomplish their purpose. The stone which had closed the sepulchre was rolled away, and “entering in, *they found not the body of Jesus* ^c.” Whilst Mary Magdalene ran to

^b Luke xxiii. 54—56; xxiv. 1.

^c Luke xxiv. 2, 3, &c. Compare also Matt. xxviii. Mark xvi. John xx.—This short notice of the very numerous events of the morning of the resurrection is of course not designed as any thing more than a *general* statement, and does not profess to include all the incidents, or notice all the feelings, and surmises of those concerned.

inform Peter and John, that the Lord had been “taken away from the sepulchre, and laid they knew not where,” an angel appeared to her companions, on the spot within the sepulchre where they had before seen Jesus laid. They were doubting concerning the matter, when the angel informed them of the fact, reminded them of the predictions of Jesus, and sent them to communicate to his disciples the intelligence they had received. “Be not afraid; I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified. Why seek ye *the living* among the dead. He is not here, but *is risen*; come, see the place where they laid him. Remember how he spake unto you while he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you^a.” “They,” says the Evangelist St. Luke, “remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.”—Peter and John also came to the sepulchre, and found the intelligence of Mary Magdalene confirmed by their own observation. She, again coming to the sepulchre, beheld two angels

^a Matt. xxviii. 5—7. Mark xvi. 6, 7. Luke xxiv. 5—7.

sitting therein; and her lamentations to them respecting the body, were followed by *the first appearance of Jesus*, who sends her to the disciples with an assurance of his approaching ascension^b. But her report was disbelieved. Jesus *again appeared* to the other women, and confirmed the direction of the angel to go and tell the disciples that they should “go into Galilee, and there they should see him.” To the disciples these things as yet “seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not^c.” Yet Jesus brought them, ere that day closed, to a full conviction of the fact of his resurrection.

Two disciples, in the course of the same day, journeyed towards Emmaus, having left Jerusalem before they had received an accurate report of *all* the incidents which we have just noticed^d. But they were very deeply impressed by the events of those days. They could think of nothing else, they could talk of nothing else. These things had happened in a manner the very reverse of all that they had wished, and hoped, and expected. They therefore communed together respecting them, in the hope that they might assist each other in reviewing and accounting for them, and in judging of the prudence and

^b Matt. xxviii. 9, 10. John xx. 14—18.

^c Luke xxiv. 10, 11.

^d Luke xxiv. 13—32.

propriety of their past conduct. But they saw evident difficulties. They had various doubts. They were perplexed. They were sad.—A stranger who joined them observed their sadness. He asked its cause. He concluded that it could be no other than the subject of their earnest discourse together. He would fain be made acquainted with it. Their minds were indeed so full of it, that they scrupled not for a moment to communicate, even to a stranger, the subject of their grief, and all its particulars. But indeed what need had they to detail the events, by which they were overwhelmed with such despondency? ‘Though a stranger to us, said they, “Art thou only a stranger in *Jerusalem*, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?”’ They entered into a disclosure of their feelings respecting them. They were shocked and distressed by the proceedings which had taken place respecting *Jesus of Nazareth*. They confessed that they were his disciples, his devoted followers. They could not even now doubt that he was “*a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.*” And yet how could they still rationally believe it? For “the chief priests and the rulers had delivered him to be condemned to death, and had crucified him.” God, whose Messenger they had conceived him to be, appeared to have disowned and abandoned him. Yet they had here-

tofore even ventured to hope “that it was he, *who should redeem Israel*,” and fulfil the promises made of God to Israel by the prophets. Yet he, whose exaltation to a throne they had expected, had been executed as a malefactor, had died, had been buried! Their hopes were at an end! And yet had they not had reason to believe them just and reasonable? And even now the matter was pregnant with fresh and yet unexplained wonders. “Besides,” added they, “this is the *third day* since these things were done.” ‘We remember certainly that he did speak something, which we never could comprehend till the event explained it, about being delivered up, and crucified. And he spoke also of *rising again on the third day*. That day has arrived, and, though we have certainly had no convincing proof that he has fulfilled a promise of such a nature, yet, strange to tell, some women and others have been to the sepulchre, but have found it empty! They have reported also that they had “seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them that were with us also went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not.” What are we to think?’—Their companion was not slow to answer, and not incompetent to teach them what they ought to think; what indeed they would have thought before, had not their understanding of the Scrip-

tures been imperfect, had they not been “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken.” They expected one “to redeem Israel.” They formerly believed that Jesus was anointed of God for that end; nor were present circumstances at all inconsistent with that supposition. Had they attended to *all* that the prophets had spoken, they would have seen that “the Christ ought to have suffered those things, which they knew that Jesus had suffered, and to enter into his glory.” “Beginning, therefore, at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” For it was Jesus—whom they had confessed to be the Christ, but of the validity of whose pretensions they were now in doubt—who then addressed them. He shewed them, while he remained *unknown* to them, that their belief of the Messiahship of their Master *ought not to be destroyed by his sufferings and death*; and that they might justly expect *that he would rise from the dead*. Soon he removed their doubts on that subject also by *revealing* himself to them; thus shewing that he who had died, *had already risen*, and that they had for some time seen and conversed with him. “He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” They saw him administer to them that ordinance, which he had celebrated with them

before his death, then explaining its design, and commanding them to continue it “in remembrance of him.” But in the joyful moment of recognition, “he vanished out of their sight;” and left them to their own reflections on all that he had taught them from the Scriptures, in connection with the fact that he had risen from the grave, and was alive. They had even before been deeply interested in the conversation of this stranger; and therefore was it that they requested him to “abide with them” on their arrival at “the village whither they went.” And, after his miraculous departure, recollecting, in the fulness of their conviction, every circumstance which contributed to communicate and confirm it, they observed to each other, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?” It was Jesus himself, still speaking “with *authority* and with *power*,” as one “who had the words of eternal life.”

This conference very fully discovers to us the views and feelings of the disciples at this juncture, when they had heard of the absence of the body of Jesus from the tomb, and that angels had declared that it was not in consequence of the *removal* of the body, but of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The same hesitation was manifested by the whole body, when the two

of the reality of his bodily presence, and of his identity, but also invited their attention to the circumstances which proved it, with an express and pointed reference to those *secret* fears and surmises of their minds, which they had neither time nor inclination to state in words. By thus alluding to "the thoughts which arose in their hearts," and directly answering them, he in another way identified himself. For he thereby shewed that he was the same Jesus who had often, during his ministry, displayed his knowledge of the hearts of all men. Their feelings, therefore, must now have been the same, as when they exclaimed on a similar occasion, "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God^a."

The same union of both these proofs is also observable, in the method by which, eight days afterwards, our Lord convinced Thomas, who on this occasion was absent. Jesus did not in the intermediate time continue his intercourse with the disciples; but he entered among them, on the eighth day, in the same miraculous manner as before. Introducing himself with the same benedictory salutation, he shewed that he was perfectly aware of the resolute perseverance of Thomas

^a John xvi. 30.

in disbelieving the report of his brethren. For immediately he said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." Unable any longer to resist a conviction of the truth, for which he had been prepared by the testimony of others, and of which he himself now had such perceptible and varied demonstration, he answered in faith and with joy, "My Lord and My God."

II. We have reviewed the circumstances, and the declarations of Jesus, which preceded the delivery of the words of our text. They were addressed to those, who by a series of clear and satisfactory proofs, had ascertained the certainty, not only of the death, but also of the resurrection of their Master. His body was not found in the sepulchre. The women who first discovered this, saw a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. The disciples ascertained the absence of the body; Peter and John found the sepulchre in such an orderly state, as indicated the probability that the body had not been surreptitiously removed. Peter saw Jesus. Mary Magdalene, and the other women also saw him. The two disciples going to Emmaus for some time conversed with him. He then appeared to the eleven, and proved to them that he was risen in the body, and in the *same* body in which he had died. This complete identity

was also still further evinced by his celebration of his recently appointed ordinance, by the subject, and comprehensiveness, and impressiveness of his instructions, by his supernatural knowledge of the human heart, and by his miraculous disappearance and re-appearance. And, in the words of the text, spoken at his interview with the eleven, he takes occasion from the full demonstration given of his resurrection, and from the conviction which his disciples had attained of its reality, to re-establish and advance them in the knowledge and belief of his divine mission and Messiahship, as fully and decisively proved by this event. And he also announced to them the purposes which were now accomplished, the blessings which were from that time to be published to the world, and the means through which their publication was to commence, with sufficient evidence to convince mankind. We can do little more than call your attention to the several considerations which Jesus proposed to the disciples at this interesting crisis. But such a brief notice as we can take, will bring to a close our review of the evidences of Christianity, as stated and defended in the discourses of its founder.

The first argument upon which Jesus entered on this occasion was that derived from *his own prophecies*; and though some of them were wholly original, yet they were more generally an ap-

plication of the ancient prophecies to himself, and to the events in which he would be the principal agent or sufferer. He cited and applied those predictions in such a manner, as to shew that he was previously aware of the true interpretation of them; and described in literal terms the events, which, at an earlier period, had been described in figurative language. He specified many additional particulars, announced the speedy fulfilment of them in his own person, and even limited the precise day for their accomplishment. His prophetic character was shewn not only by the exact accomplishment of these numerous predictions, but by the peculiar nature of those unexpected incidents, which so rapidly fulfilled his anticipations. The *events* themselves had now become familiar to the minds of his disciples. The *predictions* had perplexed and distressed them at the time of delivery; the *fulfilment* was more deeply and sensibly afflictive. But from considering both in connection, from remembering his words before the events occurred, and from observing that none of those words had failed, they might derive consolation and conviction. We may well, therefore, conceive what entire satisfaction would possess their minds, when Jesus directing them to these considerations, said unto them, “ *These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must*

be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.”—We have in a former Lecture considered the entire series of our Lord’s predictions, and shewn how he stated beforehand the purpose for which he delivered them, in order that “when the things referred to, came to pass, they might remember that he told them of those things ; and, thus remembering his words, might believe.” And when “all things were brought to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them,” every previous fear that they might have been deceived in Jesus, was replaced by the most perfect confidence in him, and the most consolatory belief of his divine mission. Nor do I know any consideration more convincing to ourselves, than that Jesus distinctly foresaw, accurately described, and with the utmost composure and complacency looked forward to those painful transactions, which terminated his ministry, and produced consequences so astonishing, and so permanent.

It obviously appears from the resurrection of Jesus, that God did not disown him, though he did not deliver him from sufferings, and from death. Nay, those very sufferings were almost immediately followed by that event, which confirmed his words as a *prophet*, and established his authority as a *divine teacher*. But in order to the complete discovery

of his character, we must advance still further, and once more advert to the consideration, that the things, which had happened to him, were such as had been described by the *Prophets*. Jesus was therefore one, whose mission had long before been designed in the counsels of God. But this may also be said of Cyrus and of John the Baptist. A comparison of the sufferings and resurrection of Jesus, with the predictions respecting them, enables us to ascribe to *him* a more exalted character; no other than that of *the Messiah*, whose coming had been foretold to the Jews, and who was by them expected to come.

Jesus himself enlarged upon this subject to his disciples after his resurrection, then entering upon the more particular detail of those statements, which, as we have shewn in a preceding Lecture, he frequently made before his death. "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that *all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning ME.*" Even a very general and superficial view will discover to us that the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, the character and office of his forerunner, and his own character, ministrations, and miracles, were certainly conformable to prophetic description. If, then, his claim to be the Messiah is established as far as these are con-

cerned, are his sufferings and death sufficient to refute his pretensions? They still more strongly confirm them. For these very things are as distinctly and variously specified “in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms,” as any of the others^a. And in order to shew this important truth to his disciples, and thus perfectly to instruct them unto the kingdom of God, Jesus advanced still farther than to announce the mere fulfilment of the prophecies in himself; for he applied the obvious fact to establish them in the belief of his *Messiahship*, and in the right knowledge of the *purposes* of his now finished commission. “Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved THE CHRIST to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be preached in *his name* among *all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem.”

He led them to see that one consistent and ever growing testimony to the character, and office, and proceedings of the Messiah, is observable in the prophetic writings; and that all their sublime, and varied, and seemingly contra-

^a As the establishment of this position would occupy more room than the plan of these Lectures will allow, the Author must content himself with referring to Mede, Discourse 13. and to Dr. Hales's Chronology, Vol. II. Part II. p. 929.

dictory descriptions were fulfilled in those things which had happened to himself. They had seen reason, before his "delivery into the hands of wicked men," to acknowledge his Messiahship. But his death had wholly staggered them; for "as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead." But that death which had overwhelmed them with despair, and that resurrection which they had so little expected, and of which they were with such difficulty convinced, were as necessary as any other particulars, to prove his Messiahship. For "thus it was written, and thus it behoved the Christ to *suffer*, and to *rise again* the third day." Since therefore such things were predicted of the Christ, and since they had been fulfilled in himself, he was by new and *decisive* evidence proved to have a just claim to that title.

He announced to them further, that "it behoved the Christ thus to suffer, and rise from the dead," not in order that he might be exalted to an earthly throne, but that "*repentance and remission of sins* might be preached *among all nations*." For thus also "it is *written*" of the Christ. The occasion and the terms of the original promise of the deliverer from evil—the succeeding promises and predictions of the patriarchal ages—the typical observances of the law—the prayers and promises, and predictions,

found in the writings of the later prophets—all these asserted and explained the spiritual nature of the blessings which it was his office to procure and to bestow.—And although the Messiah was to be born in Judea, and “the word of reconciliation” was to be ministered by Jews, and to begin at Jerusalem, yet *all nations* have ever been contemplated as having an interest in this design. So had it been expressed in *all* the earlier prophecies ; nothing had been stated to the contrary in the later ones ; and to all nations would this grand scheme in due time be made known.

Although only the heads of that discourse, in which our Lord unfolded and illustrated these things, are recorded in the Gospels, yet in the citations of prophecy, and allusions to it, by all the Evangelists, and by the Apostles, in their discourses recorded in the Acts, and in their Epistolary writings, we are furnished with ample aid for taking a survey of the whole prophetic scheme, and for ascertaining the fulfilment of the prophecies, and the accomplishment of the divine promises, in the character, and office, and work of Jesus. Enough, probably, is already familiar to each of us to enable us not only to comprehend the reasonings of our Saviour in the text, but also to derive from thence a conviction of the truth of the Gospel, and an illustration of its nature. And Jesus having thus instructed his disciples, in the

purposes and previous design of these events, added, "And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the *promise of my Father* upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with *power from on high*." He had before his death given the promise of the Holy Spirit; he now predicted its speedy communication and the design and consequences of it. "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, *not many days hence*." "Ye shall receive power, after that *the Holy Ghost* is come upon you; and *ye shall be witnesses unto me* both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth^a." As Jesus predicted, so it came to pass; and we have reason to cherish feelings of the most lively gratitude to God for those inspired writings which the Evangelists and Apostles have bequeathed to the world, and for the wisdom, and boldness, and success, with which they were enabled to discharge the ministry committed to them.

The commission which Jesus gave to his Apostles was suitable to the declarations which we have been considering. "Go ye into all the world," said he to them, "and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is bap-

^a Acts i. 5—8.

tized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned^a.” This is an alarming sanction, a fearful penalty. If these things be so,—if he, who declared these things, had that dignity and authority which has been so abundantly evidenced to us, then a great responsibility rests upon us, who have been made acquainted with the glad tidings of salvation through him. We shall hereafter have to consider the danger, as well as the causes of infidelity. Let us now ask, what does the *Christian*, who fully comprehends the purport of the title which he bears, *profess to believe*?—Our text will furnish us with an answer.

“*Thus it is written*—that the Christ should suffer, and rise again the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.”—Promises of such things, and predictions of their accomplishment in the fulness of time, had existed for ages before the Christian era. And the fulfilment of such previously existing intimations may convince the Gentile, as well as the Jew, that the communications of God’s mercy, and the interpositions of his providence, have not been made in vain. Important purposes were thereby to be answered, or these things would neither in such a manner, nor even at all, have been foretold and transacted.

^a Mark xvi. 15, 16.

And not only “thus is it written,” but “*thus it behoved the Christ to suffer.*” There was a moral necessity for it, the whole *extent* of which we can but imperfectly comprehend ; but the *nature* and *occasion* of which we know. The same God who “created man upright,” when man fell from the security of innocence into the peril of guilt, gave to him the promise of restoration and deliverance. That general *intimation* of mercy, and the perfect and explicit *revelation* of it through the Christ, are the only ground of present consolation and future hope, amidst the depravity and sinfulness of our nature. Hence alone the assurance of pardon of sin, the means of sanctification, and the hope of future glory. The origin and prevalence of evil does indeed still perplex us ; but we may justly believe, that all will finally issue in the glory of God, and that, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.”—“God was in Christ *reconciling the world to himself* ;” and therefore, “it behoved the Christ to *suffer*,” “the *just* for the *unjust*, that he might bring us to God.”—It was necessary that we should have sufficient grounds for faith and hope in him ; and therefore “it behoved the Christ to *rise from the dead.*”—It was necessary, in order that the world might be reformed and regenerated, that these facts and

their design should be *made known* to the sons of men ;—and, therefore, it behoved that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be *preached among all nations.*” We have still in our hands those records, which shew us how the merciful design was at first formed and promised, how it was carried on, and how it was completed.

The facts and miracles, the types and prophecies, by which the divine intention respecting “so great a salvation,” is evinced, form the highest possible moral demonstration. All is harmonious and consistent ; all tends to the great and important end, the salvation of man through a long predicted, divine, incarnate, and crucified Redeemer. The demonstration is as complete in its kind to prove the *mercy* of God to his sinful creatures, as is that, by which, from the wonders and order and arrangement of the material world, we deduce the *existence* and *wisdom* and *power* of the Creator. And so abundant is the evidence, and so satisfactory to all who will seriously consider it, that it is as little needful that *Jesus* should now *repeat* his miracles, and that all the other proofs both of his divine mission, and of the success of it, should *again be exhibited*, as that the world should be *created anew*, to prove the being and attributes of the Creator.

What then remains for us but to “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that we may be saved?”

His words and his works, his sufferings and his exaltation, are all recorded for our instruction, "written" with the pen of inspiration, "that we may believe that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of God*, and that believing we may have *life* through his name." Therefore were we "baptized into Christ, that we might put on Christ," "baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," the authors of our salvation. Therefore are we "taught to observe all things whatsoever Jesus hath commanded us." We also have the sure and encouraging promise, "Lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

One other evidence of the truth of the Gospel, was noticed by our Lord, the *exhibition* of which depends upon *ourselves*; which, through the "special grace of God preventing and following us," we may be *enabled* to illustrate, and than which none will be more effectual for our own consolation, and for the conversion and establishment of others in "the truth as it is in Jesus." Our Lord himself prayed for us and for all men, after he had prayed for the Apostles, who were to be his witnesses to all men of "what they had seen and heard." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; *that the world may*

believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and *that the world may know that thou hast sent me*, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.—And *I have declared unto them thy name*, and will declare it ; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them^a.”

May therefore “ God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the prince of peace, give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by unhappy divisions. May he take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord ; that as there is but one body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; one God, and Father of all ; so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, through Jesus Christ our Lord^b.”

^a John xvii. 20, &c.

^b Collect in the Service for the Anniversary of the King's Accession.

HULSEAN LECTURES

FOR 1821.



PART III.

LECTURES XVIII—XX.



OUR LORD'S NOTICE OF THE REJECTION OF HIS CLAIMS BY THE JEWS;
AND OF THE CAUSES, PROGRESS, AND CONSEQUENCES OF
INFIDELITY.

LECTURE XVIII.

OUR LORD'S NOTICE OF THE REJECTION OF HIS CLAIMS BY THE JEWS.—HE SPECIFIES SOME OF THE MORAL CAUSES OF INFIDELITY.

St. JOHN V. 40—46.

Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not ; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me ; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words ?

WE have cited in our text the whole of the third and concluding division of that discourse of our Lord before the Jewish Sanhedrim, the former portions of which have occupied so much of our attention in the course of these Lectures. We have done this in order that we might at once announce the subject of this day's Lecture.

You cannot, I conceive, have heard these words, without calling to mind the *infidelity of the Jews*. You must already have pictured to yourselves that sullen perverseness and watchful malignity, which exposed our Lord, during his public ministry, to contradiction, calumny, and persecution; that enmity, which continually became more fixed, determined, and extensive, till, through the machinations of the rulers, and with the consenting plaudits of the multitude, they finally rejected and crucified him. Carrying forward your recollections to the days, when the Apostles, “with great power, gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,” and wrought those “notable miracles^a,” which the rulers could not deny, yet by which they were not persuaded to embrace the Christian faith, you observe them rejecting and persecuting the servants, in like manner as they had before hated their Master. You behold every Jewish prejudice and jealousy rousing them to vehement and desperate opposition to the doctrine of Christ; amidst the excesses of which “deceivableness of unrighteousness,” and partly through its instrumentality, their “faith became faction,” their polity was subverted, and their name and place as a nation removed.

^a Acts iv. 16.

But we must not even here terminate our survey of the fate and fortunes of this misguided, but remarkable people, as if then they ceased to exist, as if they could no longer be traced amidst the inhabitants of the earth. We may follow them from kingdom to kingdom, and from century to century, till we come to look upon the times in which we ourselves live, and traverse the cities and kingdoms through which our race is distributed. In these, the Pagan, the Mahometan, and the Christian, partake of the general characteristics of their several countries and manners. The conquerors and the conquered become assimilated to each other. All other distinctions change and cease, except those by which the Jew is known, amidst every revolution, and in every age, country, and nation ; the same in his religious and civil peculiarities, in his person, and in his sufferings. It is not enough to say, that all this is unprecedented ; it is a miracle, which has hitherto been lasting and universal, and which appears destined to continue for ages yet to come ; for there is yet little appearance of its cessation. The Jew as yet retains his infidelity, and, therefore, his distinguishing characteristics. His ancestors rejected the lesson taught them by those miracles which were a counteraction and suspension of the laws of *nature*, and therefore the laws of *providence*, which mould and affect the destiny of all other

nations, are still, *since* the Christian era, as well as *before* it, suspended with respect to them ; that they may be *a standing miracle*, obvious to the view and apprehension of every people, and nation, and language. And what does it testify, but that truly they have been so separated, and so governed, and so preserved, by a divine council and design, for important and still progressive purposes ; for purposes which respect every nation of the earth, since in all are they present, and to all they may establish the same truths ? They hold in their hands the oracles of ancient revelation, delivered by Moses and the prophets, and they account them divine. We also hold in our's the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, and them also we account divine. The antiquity and divinity of *both* is proved by *their unbelief* and *marvellous history*, for these are an exact and abiding fulfilment of what Moses and the prophets, of what Jesus and his Apostles, have foretold. Although they deny that Jesus is the Christ, although they “ would not come to him that they might have life,” yet by what they believe and by what they disbelieve, by what they do and by what they suffer, they condemn their own infidelity, and they justify our faith. This we believe to be “ eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.” The oracles of God committed to the Jews, and which they

themselves received as the record and charter of eternal life, did "testify of Jesus." The same testified also of their infidelity, and of its punishment; and their prejudices, their peculiarities, and their fortunes, remain unaltered after the lapse of near two thousand years, and are, therefore, proved to be not transitory, but abiding. This is a fact, which at once bespeaks the interposition of God in the ages that are present, and evidences both his interposition and foreknowledge in the ages that are past, and the more remarkable consequences of which are reserved to be seen in ages yet to come.

Behold, then, the solitary individuals of that nation, who in almost every town offer themselves to your observation. Behold them congregated in your metropolis. Cross the sea, and see them in still greater numbers inhabiting the metropolis of Holland, and the cities of Poland. See them abiding alike under Christian, Mahometan, and Pagan dynasties in every quarter of the globe; sometimes restricted, persecuted, and oppressed, sometimes enjoying a portion of liberty and prosperity, but still unmixed and readily recognized. Ask yourself what, and of what original, is this strange tribe, whose fortunes and peculiarities form one solitary exception in the history of mankind. One people alone is found destitute of those affinities, by which men of like faculties, and opportunities,

and pursuits, are ever amalgamated, and united in the same political and social relations? The drama, the fictitious narrative, and the historical annals of our own and other nations, shew the universal belief and experience, that such as they are, such have they long been. If we search the records of classical writers, and those which the sacred and ordinary writers of their own nation have handed down to us, we identify the same people, then subsisting as a nation, and then as remarkable in their theology, and character, and fortunes, as they have since been. The fact admits of no denial; the conclusions drawn from it are certain and satisfactory. The infidel cannot either refute, or weaken the argument. He rather directs his attention to one particular period of the Jewish history, and contends that their rejection of the Gospel is a valid objection to the claims of Jesus, and to the reality of the evidences in favour of Christianity. Now we contend that, in *some* respects, the case is completely the reverse of his representation, and that he cannot, in *any* respect, establish the validity of his inference.

We undoubtedly grant, that the infidelity of the Jews is an astonishing, and, in some respects, a mysterious fact. Of course the entire body of the Jews of the present day are characterized by a rejection of the Gospel. But we cannot say so of those who lived in the reign of Augustus, and

who heard the instructions, beheld the miracles, and were witnesses of the crucifixion of Jesus. Great multitudes, in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in the other countries in which they were dispersed, did embrace the Gospel, and no longer were ranked with their unbelieving fellow-countrymen, but with the Christians. The numerous and increasing society, which received that title first at Antioch importing their convictions that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, consisted, for many years, *only of believing Jews*; who are, therefore, not incompetent, but admissible witnesses of the miraculous works of Jesus and his Apostles. The reality of these miracles was not indeed denied, even by those who remained in unbelief. We know that these unbelieving Jews did not admit that the *prophecies* were fulfilled in Jesus. But we must still bear in mind that a very large proportion of the nation thought otherwise; and that more of those in power were not of that number, renders the argument which is supplied by the conviction of others, more satisfactory. For the circumstance, that those who had the disposition, had also the power to persecute the early Christians, is a very decisive demonstration of the assurance and sincerity of that belief, which impelled men to join the standard of the cross, when the warfare to which it engaged them was so hazardous, and even when the hottest fire of persecution was

directed against the company of the Apostles and their followers. If we consider the inhabitants even of this land, where Christianity is established, and where it has an influence so extensive, I know not whether we should find that the number of converts in Jerusalem fell very far short of the number of those who, among ourselves, give evidence of their Christian faith, by regularly attending on the worship and sacraments of the Christian Church, and by a life which adorns the doctrine of God their Saviour. Surely, then, there is no view, which can rightly be taken of the infidelity of the Jews, which can at all impair our conviction of the reality of the Christian miracles, of the justness of the Christian interpretation of the prophecies, and of the cogency of the various other arguments, which persuade us, with “the full assurance of understanding, with the full assurance of faith, and in the full assurance of hope,” to think that, “both in the Old and New Testament, we have eternal life offered to us by Jesus Christ, as the only Mediator between God and man,” and that “to him we must be willing to come that we may have life.”

But we may, and ought to proceed still further in considering the infidelity of the Jews; we must fix our attention more exclusively on those who remained and persevered in unbelief. We must investigate the causes, and motives, and

operations of this unbelief. This will in two respects be useful to us. It will shew that the Gospel was rejected from no just, defensible, or sufficient motive, and, therefore, that their infidelity need not hinder us from seeking the blessedness of those, “who have not seen, and yet have believed.” It will also give to us an impressive and salutary caution, lest we fall after the same example of unbelief.

It must suffice merely to remind you of those erroneous interpretations, or rather of that partial selection of Scripture, which led them to reject a spiritual and suffering Messiah; to believe in the perpetuity and sufficiency of the Mosaic ritual; and to claim an interest in the promises made to Abraham in virtue of their lineal and natural descent from him, and also an unconditional and indefeisible right to the land of Canaan. It was not, however, until the scheme of the Gospel was fully unfolded, and found to be directly opposed to these favourite notions, which they had embraced so firmly, and which so many refused to abandon, that the Jews became “exceedingly jealous of the traditions of the Fathers,” and mad against the Christians. Those principles had then their full operation; and the topics just mentioned became the subjects of open controversy between those who embraced, and those who rejected the Gospel of Christ. Those topics had been slightly touched

upon even by the Baptist. They were also occasionally adverted to by our Lord ; and in one or two instances became the subjects of his discourses, parables, and reasonings with the Jews. But, in general, as in the words of our text, we find our Lord unfolding the *moral causes of infidelity* ; causes which, of themselves, if unchecked and predominant, are sufficient to choke the good seed of Evangelical truth, and to render it unfruitful. And when to these moral impediments prejudices and errors were added, such as those just noticed, we may cease to wonder that the Jew remained incapable of conviction, and proof against every argument which might persuade him to embrace the Christian faith.

These moral obstacles, which are the substratum in which all other *accidental* ones inhere, and whence the latter derive their strength and permanency, are not, alas ! confined to the Jew. They result from that “ fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby he is of his own nature inclined to evil,” and “ is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” For so long as “ the flesh thus lusteth against the spirit,” it will produce, amongst its other deadly fruits, “ heresies^a ;” some, it may be, only slightly

^a Gal. v. 20.

deviating from “the truth as it is in Jesus,” but others also those “damnable and destructive ones, by which men even deny the Lord that bought them, and draw back unto perdition^b.” But let us remember the judgments which came upon that generation among whom our Lord preached ; and let us also reflect that these things, as well as those that befel their fathers in the wilderness, “happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come^c.” Let the judgments, then, with which the Lord visited his once favoured and peculiar people, excite us to “remember how we have received and heard, and to hold fast, and to repent, if peradventure our works have not been found perfect before God, lest our candlestick be removed out of its place^d.” Hereby also let us be individually warned to prepare for the terrors and justice of that day, when “the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels ;” when “all the nations shall be gathered before him ;” when “he will take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We have been “grafted” into the body of his Church, and “partake of the root and fatness of the olive^e :

^b 2 Pet. ii. 1.

^c 1 Cor. x. 11.

^d Rev. ii. 5 ; iii. 2, 3.

^e Rom. xi. 17, &c.

the natural branches being broken off, that we might be grafted in." "Well;" says the Apostle to each one of us, "because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again."—Here is, indeed, a salutary and awakening caution. And its concluding words forcibly remind us of that glorious season, which is rapidly advancing on the wheels of time, when, "the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled," the "blindness which hath in part happened unto Israel" shall cease.

Let us now more particularly direct our attention to the remaining words of our text, with which our Lord concluded his discourse before the Sanhedrim. In them he upbraided the Jews for their unbelief and hardness of heart; and in such a manner as will also upbraid us, if we are not "holding fast the form of sounds which we have heard, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

Did Jesus, as he passed on from laying before the Jews the evidences of his divine mission,

declare that they “ would not come to him that they might have life?” Had he declared, in the former part of his discourses, that “ whoso heareth his word, and believeth on him that sent him, hath everlasting life ; and that all judicial authority was committed to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father?” Was, then, the applause, respect, and adulation of man the object at which he aimed? This he explicitly renounced ; this he ever refused.—“ I receive not honour from men.”—He *claimed* it not, as if he needed any such thing ; nor as if that could accomplish his purposes, or increase his joy. He *sought* it not, except so far as it might lead to higher and more holy principles ; he *demand*ed it not, except upon the motive that “ he, who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which had sent him.” If it were not of this character, he rejected, exposed, and repressed it. And little did he find of the honour which was due to him, who left the bosom of the Father that he might be made in the likeness of men. He was “ by men despised and rejected ; they hid, as it were, their faces from him, and esteemed him not.” “ He came to his own, and his own received him not.”

Do we inquire into the cause of their strange infatuation ? We may learn it from the mouth of him, “ who knew all men, and who needed not

that any should testify of man, because he knew what was in man ;” who exhibited throughout his ministry this intimate knowledge of the thoughts of the heart, who thereby confounded his enemies, and drew from Nathanael, and the woman of Samaria, and his own disciples, an acknowledgment of his divinity and prophetic character. “ *I know you*^a,” said he to the Jewish rulers, “ that ye have not the love of God in you.” Do we say, this is a hard saying? Yet can we not discover evident proofs of it in their principles and conduct? Though “ to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and soul, and strength,” was “ the first and great commandment of their law,” did they not, “ while they made their boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonour God?” Did they not “ make void his commandment through their traditions; and omit the weightier

^a We took some notice, in one or two former Lectures, of this instance of our Saviour’s superhuman knowledge. It is often expressly stated by the Evangelists, and in many other cases it supplies a valuable illustration. See Newcome’s Observations on our Lord’s Conduct. Chap. ii. Sect. 7, 8. Dr. Gerard observes, that our Lord “ scarce ever urged or appealed to it as an evidence.” (Dissertations, p. 165.) He certainly never noticed it *in the same form* as he did the other arguments. But it appealed so *directly* to the heart and conscience that it was not so necessary to do it. But he did *expressly* notice it, and in a very *varied* manner. See John i. 50. Matt. ix. 2, 4. Luke vii. 39—50; viii. 45—48; ix. 47. John xiii. 10, 11; 18—27; xvi. 30, 31. Luke xxii. 61. Mark xvi. 14. Luke xxiv. 38. John xx. 27.

matters of the law, judgment and mercy, and the love of God?" Did not a scrupulous and spiritless formality and a specious hypocrisy distinguish some, while profaneness and licentiousness characterized others? Undoubtedly so it was; and, therefore, we cease to wonder at those, who, in the face of a public miracle wrought on the sabbath, arraigned, and then would fain have stoned Jesus, because he called God his Father; and who scrupled to enter into the judgment-hall lest they should be defiled, at the very time when, by a foul conspiracy, they employed bribery and subornation to put Jesus to death, in order to satisfy their malignity.—But let us beware how we judge them, lest we condemn ourselves. For how imperfectly do we obey the word of Jesus, and believe in him that sent him! How little are we impressed with the majesty of God! How little do we seek his glory, dread his wrath, or seek his favour! Hereby do we prove that we are not Christians in deed and in truth, and that "the love of God is not in *us*;" and we are not Christians in deed and in truth, if "the love of God is not in *us*." For he loveth the Father, who loveth the only-begotten Son who hath declared him; whom, "though he has not seen him in the flesh, he loves, and in whom, though he sees him not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory." If we say that we love

God, where then are the effects of it? “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world.” Now if it be an evident and notorious truth, that there is much unchecked disobedience, and little habitual obedience, even in the Christian world; does not this prove a proportionate want of the love of God? If it be true, that he who loveth another will desire to possess a conformity of disposition, it follows that if we are not “partakers of a *divine nature*, so as to escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust,” we do not love God, and cannot be his obedient children; and, therefore, cannot *rightly* value, esteem, and believe in him, whom God hath sent to “call us with a *holy* calling.”

But mark another symptom and operation of unbelief. “I am come *in my Father’s name*, and ye receive me not; if another shall come *in his own name*, him ye will receive.”—The history of the Jews, both as it respects their rejection of Jesus, and also their readiness to follow any impostor, who, for his own purposes, deluded them, affords a lamentable illustration of the just-

ness of this declaration. We find them despising, opposing, and calumniating him who called them to holiness, and gave to his followers the promise of eternal life. Yet he alone came with the witness of the law, of the prophets, of the Baptist; with the witness of his miraculous works, and of the Father himself. He alone “sought not his own glory.” All his instructions and labours and sufferings tended to the glory of God, and to the benefit of mankind. In what dark and melancholy colours, therefore, does the infatuation of the Jews appear, when we behold that “deceivableness of unrighteousness,” which led myriads to follow, and perish with every interested, ambitious, and deluded upstart; who succeeded so far, not because he could offer any *evidence* of his mission, but because he came *in his own name*, and encouraged those temporal hopes, to which that unhappy people have ever clung with such unparalleled pertinacity, even amidst the ruins of their city and temple, and in every country through which they have been dispersed.—But they have not been the only people thus deluded. Not Jews only, but Pagans, and even *Christians*, received and followed *the Arabian impostor*, treading in the path of lust, murder, and ambition, without a single argument but such as would appeal to men’s interests or sensualities.—But here again let us also look at ourselves. Do we not live in times “when men will not

endure sound doctrine?" Does not every novelty, whether in ceremony, manner, or doctrine, however unmeaning, and however dangerous, attract its thousands both from among those who have not been taught better things, and from among those who have? The Christian minister proclaims the truths of the Gospel, and the realities of eternity, to empty seats, to unwilling ears, to reluctant hearts; while the ravings of pretended prophets, the rhapsodies of a Swedenbourg, a Brothers, and a Southcott, and even the venal prognostications of the fortune-telling beggar, can awaken the fears, obtain the confidence, and call forth the self-denial of deluded thousands. Nay, do we not all, because our interest is concerned in it, receive "the witness of men" without suspicion, even after we have repeatedly been deceived, and although we know that they are so powerfully biassed by interest? Yet by how many is "the witness of God, which he hath given us of his Son," neglected and undervalued, if not actually rejected! —These surely are facts, indicative of human folly, and humiliating to human pride! They show how liable the mass of mankind is to imbibe the most gross delusions, how much *all* are occupied by present interest and gratification, how calamitously they are beguiled even with respect to terrestrial and sensible objects, and how little they are disposed to rise to the contemplation of spiritual things, and to look forward to eternal realities.

But to proceed with our Lord's further remarks on the operation of such a frame of mind. "How can ye believe^a, which receive honour *one of another*, and seek not the honour *which cometh from God only*?" Those there are, in every age, who never even frame a wish for divine approbation, or whose conduct, at least, is never influenced by such a motive. Those of our Lord's contemporaries who were of such a description, would of course be negligent of his instructions, and little anxious to inquire into the nature of his claims. Nay, to such persons every system and modification of *religion* would be a subject of little interest, and would excite no attention, except so far as a compliance with custom might be necessary to preserve their reputation with others. But "the fear of man brought a snare" even upon some who were otherwise minded. It led some who *believed* in Jesus, "not to *confess* him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; because they loved the *praise of men* more than the praise of God." The observance of their own religious ordinances, and the discharge of the duties of morality, were in others rendered useless to their own hearts, and worthless in the sight of God, because they "did all their works *to be seen of men*." "Verily, they had

^a Πῶς ΔΥΝΑΣΘΕ ὑμεῖς πιστεῦσαι, κ. τ. λ.

their reward," for the praise of men is easily obtained. But "they had no reward from their Father which is in heaven;" for they did not these things "as seeing him who is invisible, nor as having respect unto the recompense of the reward," which he will bestow. But he requires the service of the heart; and will "reward openly," because he has "seen in secret."—Has this fear of human censure, this love of human applause, ceased to affect the external conduct, and to influence the motives of mankind? Does it not still afford an inducement to "obey man rather than God," to suppress the convictions of conscience, to disobey the dictates of the understanding, to sacrifice integrity to interest, and to purchase the friendship of the world by sinful compliances with its irreligious maxims and unholy customs? Yet if our ears are attuned only to the praises uttered by human lips, if our feelings and our fears depend for their quietness upon the smiles and frowns of our fellow-men, we cannot look forward in faith and hope to the time, when "the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and when every man shall have praise *of God*." We can derive no comfort from that prospect, if we are doing "those things which, although highly esteemed among men, yet are abomination in the sight of God,"—if our "hearts are not right in his sight,"—if we "seek

not the honour which cometh from him only," by doing his will, and living to his glory. If this be not our desire and endeavour, "we *cannot* believe in him, nor in Jesus Christ whom he has sent." We shall find religion an enemy to our peace; and our every wish and feeling will have a fatal tendency to make us shrink from the consideration of our present duty, and of our final accountableness. "We *cannot* serve both God and Mammon." The service of two masters of *opposite interests*, and therefore of *contrary commands*, is impracticable. The duties and events of every day will call upon us to make our choice between them. We must give a preference to the one or to the other. Our habitual conduct in consequence of that preference, will determine whether we "seek for the honour that cometh from God only," or whether we are pursuing such a course, as will one day bring us to that sense of woful desertion, and to that feeling of unavailing regret, which once prompted the well known words, "If I had served my God, as faithfully as I have served my King, he would not have forsaken me at my latter end."

"Do not think," said our Lord in conclusion, "that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For *had ye believed Moses*, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye

believe not *his writings*, how shall ye believe *my words*?" That an actual disbelief both of Moses and of the Prophets prevailed very extensively among the Jews in our Lord's time, we have the express testimony of Josephus; and it is obviously assigned by our Lord as one leading cause of their rejection of himself. If they had had a firm belief in Moses, and a thorough acquaintance with his predictions and institutions, and with his account of those of the earlier ages, they would have allowed, upon his authority, that they might expect the Messiah to be a Prophet like their original legislator, a spiritual Deliverer from moral evil, "a blessing to all nations." His writings they had it in their power to study, and to compare with later revelations. If they disbelieved them, or if their prejudices and interested views were stronger than their convictions, or if they were ignorant of them,—from whatever cause they *believed not* what Moses taught, it was not likely, that they would receive the doctrine of Jesus; for "Moses wrote of him." It is asserted that a similar infidelity is far from uncommon among the *Jews of this day*. It would of course be of little avail to attempt to convince any such, that Jesus was the Messiah. We must consider them as consenting with *all other Deists* in a denial not only of the fact of Revelation, but also of its importance, and necessity, and probability.

All who profess *Christianity*, thereby imply a confession of the divine authority both of the Old and New Testaments. Why, then, is the efficacy of Christianity so incomplete? Why, but because all the causes and motives which we have already considered do in fact *weaken*, if they do not destroy, the belief of its certain and authoritative truth? If it is really believed, why not also valued, and obeyed? A *firm* conviction of those things, which, if true, involve such an awful responsibility, and lead to such momentous consequences, would at least excite our desires, and arouse us to diligent endeavours. If we really are not disposed to *deny* the truth of the Scriptures, our obedience may be imperfect, and our impression of their importance insufficient and inefficacious, because our *attention* to them has probably been too slight. Yet will not the religion which we profess, and the Scriptures which we believe, convict us of criminality in this unhappy negligence?—If, again, we repose our hopes of salvation on merely outward conformity to the ceremonial of Christianity, or if we hope that our obedience to some commands will compensate for our neglect of others, will not the Scriptures, which command and require *all these*, in this case also condemn us? If we think that the dictates of unassisted reason are sufficient, and if therefore we are not careful to appeal “to the

law and to the testimony," will not our own consciences tell us that our imperfect obedience requires that more perfect rule, and that better righteousness, which the Scriptures teach us? And if we place our trust in the *general* belief of the mercy of God, will not the Scriptures again condemn us, because God has not promised mercy except to those, who have "repentance towards him, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? If we trust in uncertain riches, and in the sufficiency of our own skill and diligence, will not our own experience of the vanity and uncertainty of all earthly things, and the testimony of the Scripture to the certainty and importance of the things unseen, again condemn us?—Jesus as yet condemns us not. He now is preached to us as a *Saviour*. There is "an appointed day," in which he will be our *Judge*. He needs not to accuse the sons of men. Moses and the prophets will accuse *the Jews*. Their word, and that which Jesus spoke, and the writings of his Apostles, will accuse *us*. "The same will judge us at the last day." And it will then appear, however it may seem to us now, that in whatsoever way we have "departed from the living God," we have evidenced the existence, and been subject to the influence of "an evil heart of unbelief." To all who are in such a state "the Gospel is hid." Its promises do not invite, and its terrors do not


impress them. They feel not their need of pardon, and righteousness, and salvation ; and the Gospel, therefore, is not to them “the power of God unto salvation,” because it is so only “*to him that believeth.*”

“Examine yourselves, therefore, whether ye be in the faith.” For if this Gospel was “first spoken to us by the Lord, and confirmed to us by them that heard him, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” If we abide in unbelief, in error, or in unholiness, we shall have no sufficient plea to be *excused*, but shall be counted *unworthy* to be partakers of that “eternal glory to which we are called by Christ Jesus.” Are ye then *meet* for that inheritance? Seriously, I beseech you, consider that question.—Ere another sabbath arrives, most of you, that are present here this day, will have separated from each other for a considerable season^a. If the last week has announced to us the removal from life of *two of the younger members* of our body, what may be the events of so long a period? *I* may not be permitted to conclude my appointed labours ; some of *you* may never return to resume your’s. But, even if this should not be the case, are we prepared to meet the trials which may come upon

^a This Lecture was delivered June 3, 1821, two days after the division of the Easter term, and it *completed* the Spring course.

us, should we be continued in life? How are we fitted to endure the reverses of fortune, the removal of our dearest relatives, and the lengthened days of sickness? Are we armed with patience? Are we prepared to receive such visitations “to our profit, that we may be partakers of God’s holiness?” But religion is requisite not only to support and instruct us in the hour of adversity, but to keep us from falling in the still more slippery path of prosperity, to direct us in every duty, to preserve us in every temptation. It is ‘our light in darkness, and our life in death.’ Therefore, “beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life^a.”

^a Jude 20, 21.



LECTURE XIX.

THE INFIDELITY OF THE JEWS IN ITS MORE ADVANCED STAGE NOTICED BY OUR LORD WITH ALLUSION TO A PASSAGE OF ISAIAH.—THE OCCASION AND PURPORT OF HIS REMARKS; AND A SIMILAR APPLICATION OF THE SAME PASSAGE BY THE EVANGELIST ST. JOHN.—OTHER CAUTIONS AND DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY OUR LORD RESPECTING THE TEMPER AND METHOD PROPER FOR RELIGIOUS INQUIRY.

St. MATT. XIII. 14—16.

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. —For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

To bestow on mankind a remedy for the diseases of the soul, and to heal the wounds which sin had inflicted, was the office and merciful purpose of him whose words we have cited. But the 'comfortable words' in which he offered these benefits, gave the assurance of them only to such as 'truly turned to him;' to those who were converted from

the error of their ways, who recognized both their own need of healing, and his power to heal ; who “came unto God by him,” who “loved him, and kept his saying.” None but persons of such a character could rightly esteem, and desire his interposition on their behalf, or even be fitted to participate in its benefits.

Those who are described in the words of our text, were as yet far from having attained to such a state of mind. They had yet to perceive his divine character, and the commission with which he was charged. They had yet to understand the spiritual nature of Messiah’s kingdom, and to discern “the signs of the times” which indicated its approach. They had to purge their hearts from the grossness of their unscriptural opinions and carnal expectations ; to lend a willing ear to statements which combated their favorite prejudices, and which demanded of them conduct and sacrifices little congenial to their wishes. They had to open the eyes, which had hitherto regarded only sensible and temporal good, to contemplate the blessedness and glory of that heavenly kingdom which should dignify them with spiritual and eternal privileges. They had to retrace the steps by which they were now fast advancing towards a determination not to believe, and towards a voluntary insensibility to the force of the most decisive evidence.—When Jesus had noticed the symp-

toms and fatal operation and increasing influence of unbelief, he passed on to congratulate and encourage the faithful few, who were afterwards to be his witnesses throughout the world, and who, though yet deficient in knowledge, discovered a readiness and desire to obtain an increase of it. "But blessed," said he, "are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

We also, through the labours and writings of these disciples of Jesus, have been made acquainted with those "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," which were unfolded to them. Yet although these heavenly truths were in old time the subjects of promise and of prophecy, and the objects of earnest expectation to those who had not as yet seen their accomplishment; and although they have exercised the faith and joy and gratitude of thousands, who, since their full revelation, have derived from them consolation, and hope and victory; yet comparatively few, even now, are they, who see and hear and understand them, so as to seek and embrace them, and to hold them fast. Many are they who reject and despise them, and who even endeavour to beguile others of their consolations in time, and

of their hopes for eternity, by the revival of objections long since refuted, and often wholly groundless. Many are they also, whose instability, self-indulgence, and depravity make them rejoice in any pretext, by which they may entrench themselves in the short-lived and perilous security of unbelief.—Yet is truth ever the same ; and, like its divine Author, hath “ no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” The hope set before us, the grounds of that hope, and the character of those, to whom alone it belongs, change not. Nay, even error and infidelity, though diversified in form, and modified by circumstances, are in all ages substantially the same as to their sources, and motives, and operations.

We observed in the commencement of our Lectures, that our Lord’s discourses very frequently touch upon this important head. He seldom either states to us his pretensions and doctrine, or enlarges upon the evidence of them, without in some way appealing to the conscience, and laying open the depravity and waywardness of the human heart. Almost every passage which has been made the subject of our meditation has furnished some appropriate topic of practical appeal ; and our last Lecture was wholly occupied in the consideration of the infidelity of the Jews, and of those moral causes, to which our Lord ascribed its origin in the close of his discourse before the

Sanhedrim. In our two remaining Lectures we purpose to take some further notice of several detached passages on the same subject. In this, such will be noticed as speak of infidelity in a more advanced stage, and those also which may caution us against its approaches, and apprise us of that temper and method, which must be pursued by the impartial and successful inquirer. In our next we shall have to consider infidelity in its last, confirmed, and irremediable stage, and those sanctions and declarations, by which our Lord required us to "believe the Gospel."

The occasion of the words of our text was, the inquiry of the disciples why Jesus adopted the use of Parables. The propriety and meaning of his answer will readily be discovered, if it be remembered, that he spoke to the people without parables, until the time that his miracles were attributed to the co-operation of Beelzebub, and "a sign from heaven" was demanded by those, whom all his former miracles had failed to convince, and yet whose cavils against them had been unanswerably refuted^a. This obduracy continued to characterize a large proportion of our Lord's hearers, more especially a majority of those in power. Yet had he many truths yet to declare to them, some of which were even still more

^a See Matt. xii. and xiii.

likely to excite their prejudice and opposition ; and therefore, because of their unbelief, he veiled them under the figurative language of parables. Frequently they were able to perceive the general design of what he delivered in this manner, and were on such occasions offended and exasperated. Not that such truths were designed to be concealed from them *for ever*. They were only *partially* concealed even for a time. But this method of delivery was sufficient to prove *that Jesus had himself stated* all these unwelcome truths ; and not only did he explain all things to his disciples in private, but informed them that they were designed for universal publication, after the objection occasioned by his humble appearance was removed, and the evidence of his character and authority was completed by his entering into glory^a. Our Lord expressly assigns these reasons for his adoption of the parabolic mode of instruction. The more teachable character of his disciples enabled him to proceed in imparting to them fuller instructions ; and the office, which they were afterwards to sustain when the full publication of the Gospel should commence, rendered it necessary thus to inform and discipline them. But in consequence of the non-improvement and rejection

^a See Matt. xiii. 36, 51, 52. Mark iv. 10—25, 33, 34. Matt. x. 25—27. Luke viii. 10—18.

of what he had before taught, it was both just and necessary to refrain from communicating to others the same knowledge. It could *as yet* serve no good end, though he “spake to them the word in parables, as they were able to bear it.” “It is given unto you,” said he to his disciples, “to know *the mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

In the text our Lord distinctly asserts that unbelief was generally prevalent among those, to whom he ministered the words of eternal life; and he so describes it, in the prophetic language of Isaiah, as to shew that he knew that it had already assumed a decided and confirmed cha-

character. He had previously declared, before the council, that he was aware that "they were not willing to come to him that they might have life;" and he then endeavoured to awaken them to serious reflection by referring them to several sinister and unholy principles which were likely to entangle them in the fetters of unbelief. The fact was soon found to be such as he had intimated. The longer he laboured among them, the more were prejudice, and calumny, and opposition excited. "Because he told them the truth, they would not believe him." They closed their ears against the reception of truths so unwelcome, and, as they thought, so needless. Hearing with the outward ear, they understood not with the heart; like their fathers of old to whom the prophets had been sent. Every faculty of the soul was armed and fortified against the supposition that such a teacher could be their Messiah, or that they had need of any change in religion, or indeed of any blessing which the Messiah could bestow, except deliverance from national subjection, and the possession of national glory. Seeing therefore with their eyes the miracles of Jesus, they perceived not the finger of God therein revealing itself, and, as it were, pointing out Jesus as that "his beloved servant, on whom he had put his Spirit." Not that they could disprove, or that they ever attempted to deny the reality of the

miracles. But they were not disposed to admit their *evidence*, because they had no inclination to admit the *pretensions of him who wrought them*. They could behold the exhibition of the most signal miracles, without any other emotion than a feeling of jealousy and indignation. Some, in consequence of having been eye-witnesses of the raising of Lazarus, immediately went to inform the Pharisees; and they, *avowedly* on the very ground of the reality and notoriety of these “many miracles,” coolly deliberated on the safest and surest method of putting him who wrought them to death. Yet, at the same time, they “built the sepulchres of the prophets, and boasted how, if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would not have been sharers in their blood-guiltiness.”—The pure, perspicuous, and heart-searching discourses of Jesus seemed to have as little permanent influence as his miracles. Many even listened with no other feeling or design, than “that they might entangle him in his talk, and have somewhat of which to accuse him.” So that *fact* fully justified the *assertion* of Jesus respecting them, in allusion to the words of Isaiah. “Their heart had waxed gross, and their ears were dull of hearing, and their eyes had they closed, in such a manner as if they had determined to secure themselves against any probability that at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with

their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and he should heal them^a.”

Our Lord applies the words of the prophet more especially to their rejection of his *doctrine*. But still, as we have just observed, that rejection had then recently been shewn to be decided and irrecoverable, because the doctrine was rejected *in defiance of those miracles*, by which he established its divine authority, and because they had even ventured to propagate the most malignant *cavils* both against *Jesus* and *his miracles*. But it is worthy of remark, that St. John cites the same, and also another passage of Isaiah, with more immediate reference to the *miracles* of Jesus, after he closed his own narrative of them. He had recorded the caution of Jesus to the people to “walk while they had the light, lest darkness should come upon them.” “But,” adds the Evangelist, “though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand

^a Isai. vi. 9, 10.—Compare Ezek. xii. 2.

with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them^b." To this state of mind the Evangelist attributes an *incapacity* for believing the report of the prophets respecting him, "who, when he was seen, was without form or comeliness, and had no beauty that men should desire him; and whom, *therefore*, they despised and rejected, and esteemed not." By all who were affected in this manner "the arm of the LORD," which upheld, and co-operated with Jesus, was not discovered; and therefore he who was "sent of the Father, and sealed and sanctified by him," was esteemed "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." No other than such delusion, and obduracy, could be the consequence of the state of mind which is described by the prophet, and which is brought before our notice, both by our Lord and his Apostles^c.

But St. John seems to cite the words as if it were *God* who had thus "blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart." And St. Mark and St. Luke also report our Lord's citation of the passage, as if Jesus adopted the use of parables in order to *give occasion* to this blindness and unbelief^d.—We have already remarked that it is, in a sense, true that Jesus employed parables to *conceal* some

^b John xii. 37, &c. ^c See also Acts xxviii. 26. Rom. xi. 8.

^d Mark iv. 11—13. Luke viii. 10.

obnoxious truths for a time. But it is also equally clear, that St. Matthew teaches us that this very *blindness and unbelief* was itself the *occasion* of his first use of the parabolic method. But if we consult the passage as it stands in the prophet himself, we find that Jesus, in the *latter words* of our text, has rather *interpreted* than cited the *latter part of the prophecy*. For the prophecy itself has the form of expression which is found in the other three Evangelists. "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. *Make* the heart of this people fat, and *make* their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." But it does follow even from hence, that this "shutting up in unbelief" is wholly, and *in the first instance* to be ascribed to divine influence on the mind. This is a phraseology adopted in many other places of the prophetic writings; and it is designed only to express the lamentable *certainty* with which the event is foretold. And we will illustrate this peculiarity of the prophetic style by one citation from the prophet Jeremiah. "The Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to *root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to*

plant.” This passage evidently speaks only of the commission given to the prophet to announce the certainty with which those things could come to pass, of which he is figuratively said to be the instrument. No other interpretation could for a moment be entertained. Upon the very same principle should we interpret the passage under consideration. It predicts the existence, and prevalence, and fatal strength of unbelief among those, who heard the words of God, and had the arm of the Lord revealed before them. But it ascribes not the effect *to God* as the cause. The cause was in themselves, and resulted from the depravity of the human heart. It is not the God of heaven, but “*the god of this world* that blinds the minds of them that believe not^a.” “No man can say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for he is but drawn away, and enticed of his own lust^b.” The Spirit of God *strives* with man, to convince, recover, and reform him. But we must add, with all faithfulness and admonition, that he does not *always* strive with man; that he *may* be grieved and resisted, and that his holy influence *may* be quenched. Then, indeed, do we allow that man is given over to *a judicial blindness*; that they, “who like not to *retain God in their knowledge*^c, who believe not the

^a 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.^b James i. 13—17.^c Rom. i. 28.

truth, and have *pleasure in unrighteousness*, are at length given over to a reprobate mind." Because they "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God sends upon them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie^a." And therefore are we called upon to "suffer the word of exhortation" respecting this matter. Therefore are we bound to "teach every man, and to warn every man." Therefore do we beseech every one to inquire respecting himself, whether he has, with the heart, and with a true and lively faith, believed in Jesus Christ; or whether there be any unsatisfied doubt, any secret reserve, any unmortified lust still abiding within him. For ought he knows, such disorders of the soul, if they receive not a timely check, may generate in the end a deadly and incurable malady. The understanding may be blinded, the will become alienated from the life of God, and the conscience be rendered insensible to every warning and visitation. He who is not recovered from such a state, "will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," and "not having the spirit of Christ, and therefore being none of his," may finally "make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience;" and "not understand, nor be converted, nor be healed."

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things

^a 2 Thess. ii. 10—12.

of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Yet our Lord himself exhorted his disciples to "watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation;" and assigned for the precept a reason, which our own experience very abundantly confirms, that even when "the spirit of man is willing, the flesh may be weak^b." Let us not, therefore, shrink from the most minute and awakening view of the dangers which beset us; that thus we may be excited to seek the peace, and rest, and joy, which Jesus promised and bequeathed to his disciples. If we have already followed him, let us not, "having put our hand to the plough, look back," and thus "unfit ourselves for the kingdom of God^c." But rather let us "sit down, and count the cost, and consider whether, having begun to build, we shall be able to finish." Let us ascertain our strength for this long and arduous warfare, and see "whether we be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against us with twenty thousand^d." If "in the world we have tribulation," let us be cheered by the recollection that "our Master hath overcome the world^e." And when, "because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold," and when others, who "have endured for a season,

^b Matt. xxvi. 41.

^c Luke ix. 62.

^d Luke xiv. 28—30, 31.

^e John xvi. 33.

in time of temptation fall away^a," let us remember the words which Jesus repeated on more than one occasion, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved^b."

We have not alluded to difficulties and temptations which have no existence, or of which Jesus did not forewarn mankind, when stating to them the nature and design of his Religion. There are "fightings without, and fears within." There are trials to be endured, and sacrifices to be made, if need and occasion be, which deter the unbeliever, and try the steadfastness of the believer. It was not without reason that Simeon declared of the holy child Jesus, "Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed^c." It was a declaration which Jesus himself afterwards confirmed. Both by various general statements, and in his instructions to his disciples, and also in his answers to several who professed a readiness to follow him, he has sufficiently made it known that "if any man come after him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow him^d." He prepared his Apostles and early followers to expect "scourg-

^a Matt. xxiv. 12. Mark iv. 17. Luke viii. 13.

^b Matt. x. 22; xxiv. 13. ^c Luke ii. 34, 35. ^d Luke ix. 23.

ings, and persecutions, and death, and to be hated of all men, and of all nations, for his name's sake," even by all that numerous class in all ages, who "have not known the Father nor him^e." He distinctly told them that though "in him they should have peace" of mind, yet "he came not to send external peace on earth, but a sword;" and that "a man's foes would be those of his own household^f." — Yet he made no allowance for apostacy even in this extreme case: he appealed to them for the reasonableness of what he spoke, by the question, "What would a man be profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" For what earthly thing is so precious, as to be "given in exchange for the soul^g?" He therefore distinctly stated the absolute necessity of stedfastness, the danger of swerving from it, and the reward and true policy of maintaining it. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it^h." "He

^e Matt. x. 17, 22; xxiv. 9. John xv. 20; xvi. 3.

^f John xvi. 33. Matt. x. 34—36. ^g Matt. xvi. 26.

^h Matt. x. 37—39.

that is ashamed of me, and of my words,—he that shall deny me before men,—of him will I be ashamed, and him will I deny before the angels of God^a. Those that confess me before men, I will confess before the angels of God.” He promises to those, that forsake all for his sake, that “they shall receive manifold more in this present time, *with persecutions*, and in the world to come life everlasting^b.” Now it is clear, from the very *nature* of the case, that all this is neither unreasonable nor unnecessary; and although we of this age and country are not called to endure such persecutions, in testimony either of our fidelity to the *Gospel itself*, or to its *essential doctrines*, yet we know not how soon it may come upon us. A generation has scarcely passed away since such a trial came upon all the professing Christians of a neighbouring nation. Though we are not likely to experience the persecuting intolerance of *Paganism*, nor the effects of the “exceeding madness” of a *Jew’s* malignity against the Gospel, nor, we trust, the restoration to power of the *most intolerant* professors of the *Christian* faith, who once lighted up the fires of persecution in the cities and Universities of England, and perpetrated the most unheard of massacres;—yet have we not found

^a Mark viii. 38; Matt. x. 32, 33.

^b Mark x. 28—30.

that Deism itself, which so proudly boasts of its philanthropy, and disclaims all bigotry and intolerance, can surpass all other systems in the “cruelty of its tender mercies,” and in the deadliness of its hatred to Christianity? The intimations of those things “that are to come hereafter,” recorded in the Scriptures of truth, do not permit us to hope that such scenes will never again be exhibited on this earth. Have we, then, that *firm conviction* of the truth of the Gospel, and of the value and certainty of its promises, and that *devotedness* also to the cause of God and of truth, which would enable us to retain our integrity in such a fiery trial? Those who are not *ready* to make such sacrifices, and to practise such self-denial, if any circumstances should arise to require them, cannot be the disciples of Jesus. Yet how many are even unable to endure the contemptuous *look* and the slanderous *word*! How many are *more than ashamed* of Christianity, and even are *proud* of their disregard both of its threats and promises! This fear of man, this unhappy vanity, this love of self and of this world, are fertile sources of infidelity and inconsistency.

Our Lord has also cautioned us against the unhappy influence of *worldly wealth*. “How hardly shall they that have riches—they that trust in riches—enter into the kingdom of God^c!” We

^c Mark x. 23, 24.

know too well how readily our hearts become attached to the “good things of this life,”—how soon they are “overcharged with the cares of this life,”—how rapidly covetousness is generated, and how firmly it seats itself in the soul,—not to understand how soon “the word of God becometh unfruitful, when choked by the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches^a.”—“Take heed then, and beware of covetousness^b,” and seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness^c;” like the merchant in the parable, “even selling all that ye have, to purchase the pearl of great price^d.”

But not only must the love of riches be abandoned, and “poverty of spirit” be cultivated, but *purity of heart* must also be maintained. The love of sin naturally disposes us to “love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil^e.” Yet the sin that most easily besets us, though as dear, and seemingly as necessary to our comfort, as “a right hand, or a right eye,” must be “cut off and cast from us, that we may enter into life^f.” We must bring into our Christian life, not only the hatred of sin, but also the love of holiness, and a readiness to practise it, if we are rightly to

^a Luke xvi. 25 ; xxi. 34. Matt. xiii. 22.

^b Luke xii. 15. ^c Matt. vi. 33. ^d Matt. xiii. 46.

^e John iii. 19. ^f Matt. xviii. 8, 9.

apprehend either the divinity and excellency of our religion, or to make progress therein, or not to dislike and shrink from it. “If any man be willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself^s.”—And we must make continual advances in every good and holy purpose, improving the graces to which we have already attained, and desiring and seeking after an increase of them. For “whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath^h.” After we have “done all,” we are but “unprofitable servants;” but he, who is “an unprofitable servant” because he hath not employed the talent committed to him, “will be cast into outer darkness.”—And that the necessity of walking in all purity of heart and life may be more deeply impressed upon our minds, let us hear other declarations of our Lord. “That servant, which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him

^s John vii. 17.

^h Matt. xiii. 12.

they will ask the more^a.” “In that day,” said our Master and our future Judge, “I will profess unto them, that have not done the will of my Father which is in heaven, *I never knew you, depart from me, all ye that work iniquity*^b.”

Coming to the study of the truth as it is in Jesus, with purity of heart and purposes of obedience, we must also come with *docility* and in *humility*. “For except we be converted and be as little children,” and receive the kingdom of God as meek, teachable, guiltless infants, “we shall not enter therein^c.” We shall never either rightly apprehend its nature, or be impressed by its promises. They that are “proud,” as well as “they that do wickedly,” will inherit not favour, but shame. For said Jesus again, “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted^d.”

And lastly, in carrying on the important inquiry after divine truth, we must ever remember that it must be *learnt from God*; from his written word, from the words and upon the authority of Jesus, who “spoke as the Father gave him commandment,”—and through the enlightening, and sanctifying, and transforming influence of that Holy Spirit, who can ‘give us a right judgement

^a Luke xii. 47, 48. ^b Matt. vii. 21—23. ^c Matt. xviii. 3.

^d Mal. iv. 1. Luke xiv. 11. and xviii. 14.

in all things, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by his holy inspiration, that so we may think those things that be good, and by his merciful guiding perform the same.' This our Lord has distinctly taught in that important, though difficult, discourse respecting the "living bread which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."—"But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. '*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*' 'This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that *every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him*, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' 'Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, *draw him*. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all TAUGHT OF GOD^e. Every man, therefore, that hath *heard*, and hath *learned of the Father*, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father^f.'"—I need scarcely to repeat to you, what I have already stated, as collected from a careful examination of these

^e Isai. liv. 13. Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

^f John vi. 37—46.

words, that if we are so to believe on the Son as to obtain at the last day a resurrection to eternal life, we must learn of the Father by the witness which he has given of his Son. We must be taught of him through his word, and be drawn by his Spirit, by that holy Spirit of his promise, which “he giveth to them that ask him;” and which “shall be in us a well of water springing to everlasting life;” refreshing and fertilizing our souls, and causing us to “wait for the hope of righteousness by faith^a.”

We must, therefore, diligently avail ourselves of those means of grace, by which the knowledge of God may be obtained and increased,—our affections drawn heaven-wards,—our holy resolutions strengthened; until we are brought into that happy state, of which our Saviour speaks in those mysterious, yet consolatory words: “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” But if, on the other hand, we neglect those ‘means of grace’ which are designed to communicate a ‘hope of glory,’—if we neglect to pray for ‘God’s continual help,’—if we are wilfully ignorant of his word,—if we are puffed up with a conceit of

^a See 1 John ii. 20—27; iv. 1—6, and 12—16; v. 9—13. Luke xi. 13. John iv. 14. Gal. v. 5. James i. 5, 17, &c.

our own sufficiency and wisdom,—if we are averse from the holy ways and requirements of God, and prefer the lusts, and riches, and indulgences of the world, to the promised blessings of eternity,—if we are unwilling to practise patience and self-denial,—if the fear of man deters us from duty, and the applause of man is more esteemed than the approbation of God,—if we are suffering any of these propensities to grow and gather strength within us, then are we in imminent danger of apostacy and infidelity.

Let our's, then, be the endeavour and the prayer, that we may ever share in the character and hopes of those, of whom Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one^b.” For, upon hearing such words as these, we may say with the beloved Apostle, “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life^c.”


^b John x. 27—30.

^c 1 John v. 20.

LECTURE XX.



OUR LORD'S NOTICE OF INFIDELITY IN ITS LAST AND CONFIRMED STAGE.—THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE SON OF MAN, AND THAT AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.—THE DEMAND OF ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE, WHEN THAT WHICH IS OFFERED HAS BEEN REJECTED.—SANCTIONS WITH WHICH THE GOSPEL IS ACCOMPANIED.—CONCLUSION.



St. LUKE XII. 8—10.

Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.

CONFORMABLY to the directions of the pious founder of this Lecture, I now appear before you for the twentieth time, that I may on this day complete the task assigned to me. It has been my endeavour to lay before you, in the very words of Jesus himself, the claims which he advanced, and the arguments by which he supported them. Adopting the same method, I have also considered the

infidelity of the Jews, in connexion with those moral causes in which it originated ; also calling your attention, to the statements in which our Lord himself has specified those dispositions of mind, which alone can lead to an honest, impartial, and successful inquiry. But I should be leaving unnoticed, an important department of my subject, did I not proceed to consider infidelity, in its *last*, and *confirmed*, and *irremediable* stage ; and also to bespeak your attention to some of those passages, in which our Lord has declared the awful responsibility of mankind, with regard to their reception, or rejection of his message.

Among the circumstances which finally operated to confirm the infidelity of a great body of the Jewish people, we may reckon the opposition and ultimate triumph of the rulers,—and the disappointment of those hopes of a temporal kingdom, which the multitude had entertained, and which had probably been revived by the solemn entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. None of the rulers or Pharisees had openly professed their belief in him ; and those who were disposed so to do, suppressed their convictions, because the majority of their brethren had decided upon the excommunication of all such, and had issued a proclamation for the apprehension of Jesus. The same motives, strengthened by the example of their superiors, operated very powerfully on the

multitude, so that they concurred “with loud voices,” in the demand that he should be crucified.—When Jesus had predicted that “the Son of man should be lifted up,” they had objected, in answer to his remark, that they conceived “from the law, that Christ abideth for ever.”—Again, both the people and their rulers knew, from the prophets, that “the Christ would come from Bethlehem, the city of David.” But they took it for granted, that, because Jesus had principally resided in Galilee, he was a Galilean.—But they had also other doubts respecting his Messiahship. They thought that they knew “whence he was,” that he was “the Son of Joseph,” and that “his brethren were living among them ;” whereas they expected that “when Christ should come, no man would know whence he was.” Besides, the mean occupation and obscurity of his supposed parents, and the poverty and external lowliness of his own condition, contributed still further to increase their prejudices against his claims to be the Messiah.—As a person obviously professing sanctity of character, and the office of a divine teacher, he also appeared to act inconsistently, and in opposition to the precepts of their laws, and the custom of their own teachers, by adopting an unreserved and familiar intercourse with persons of all ranks and characters. “He came eating and drinking,” observing no particular abstinence, as

they supposed that a prophet ought to do ; and they were therefore disposed to call him “ a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber.” He was “ the friend of publicans and sinners,” and went to eat bread with them. He suffered them “ to touch him,” as if he had not known their real character, as a prophet ought to have done. He did not, either by his actions, or by his remarks in defence of them, appear to pay sufficient respect to the sabbath ; and they therefore contended that he was “ not of God, because he kept not the sabbath-day,” in the manner conformable to their notions.

These objections proceeded from their own ignorance of the law and prophets, of his real history and original, and of the design of his mission ;—or from an impatient wish that he should shew himself openly to the world,—or from the fear of the ruling Jews,—or from inattention to the miracles which he wrought before them, to the arguments by which he defended himself, and to the future evidences which he predicted ; by which all their objections to his lowly original, and humble demeanour would be answered. Even *at the time*, they saw that there were many circumstances, for which they could not consistently account, except upon principles which would induce them to believe in him. For “ how could he know letters, having never learned ?” “ Whence had he such wisdom, and such mighty works ?”

They were “astonished at his doctrine,” they allowed that he was “a good man;” and they justly asked each other, “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man doeth?” So there was “a division among the people concerning him.” And though some of them thought that “the words, which he spoke, were not *the words of one possessed*,” yet many scrupled not to assert that to his face, and to propagate the same insinuation among the people.—When he alluded to the murderous designs harboured against him, they answered, “Thou hast a devil; who goeth about to kill thee?” implying that he was under the influence of a *lying* Spirit^a.—When he appeared to attack their supposed privileges as the children of Abraham, they answered, “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” Imputing to him the *enmity* of a Samaritan against their law and national privileges; and the *erroneous views* of one possessed^b.—And when he further told them, that “if a man kept his saying, he should never see death,” they answered, “Now we know that thou hast a devil^c.”—And some of those who thought that he “deceived the people,” said to their associates, “He hath a devil and is *mad*; why hear ye him^d?”

^a John vii. 20.^b John viii. 48.^c Ver. 52.^d Ibid. x. 20, 21.

Such, and so various, were the instances of that which our Lord terms “the *blasphemy against the Son of man* ;” which, as it proceeded in a great measure from ignorance, and from prejudices for which there was at that time a plausible excuse, might therefore be repented of, and obtain *forgiveness*. But the same imputation was, upon some other occasions, propagated with a different connexion and application, which may perhaps be found to *approach* at least to criminality of a deeper dye, if not actually to constitute that guilt to which forgiveness is *denied*. The blasphemy or evil speaking, was not merely directed against the *person*, and *conduct*, and *doctrine* of the Son of man, but even against the *evidences* by which the divinity of his mission was supported. The cavils to which we allude were of two kinds, one, which imputed *the miracles already wrought to diabolical agency* ; the other, which complained of *the absence of a particular species of evidence*, which they chose to require, implying, at the same time, that nothing less than a compliance with their demand, would obtain their acquiescence in his pretensions.

The occasion, and intent, and invalidity of the first of these cavils we have formerly considered*.”
“He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the

* Lecture X.

devils he casteth out devils.” We endeavoured to shew the reality of possessions, and the reality of that class of our Lord’s miracles. We considered at the same time his refutation of the cavil of the Pharisees, and the meaning and justice of the other and only tenable inference from those miracles, “If I by the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” That remark was followed by the solemn declaration respecting *the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*^a, some brief notice of which is required by the subject of our present Lecture.

I. “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come;” or as St. Mark records it, “hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation^b.”

I almost fear to enter on a subject at once so awful and difficult as this, more particularly as

^a Matt. xii. 31, &c. Mark iii. 28, &c.

^b Mark iii. 30.

I shall be unable to enter on an enlarged discussion respecting it, because several other topics must be adverted to in this concluding Lecture. Three questions, however, obviously suggest themselves; first, Whether those, *whom our Lord addressed*, were then *guilty* of this irremissible sin; secondly, What reference his declaration had to the period *which followed his personal ministry*; and thirdly, Whether *we* are liable to incur the guilt by him stated to be unpardonable.

1. With respect to the *first* of these questions it may be observed, that many suppose that the Pharisees were at the time guilty of this sin, and also contend that it was almost peculiar to them. They ground this supposition on the connexion of this declaration with *the cavil of the Pharisees*^c,—on the words ascribed by St. Matthew to our Lord himself, that he “cast out demons by *the Spirit of God*^d ;” —and on the remark immediately subjoined by St. Mark, after he has repeated the denunciation itself, “*Because they said, He hath an unclean Spirit*^e.” But this observation of St. Mark seems more properly referable to the *whole answer* of our Lord to the cavil of the Pharisees, than to the *last clause of it only*. And with regard to the expression, “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God,” it may

^c Matt. xii. 24—31.

^d Matt. xii. 28.

^e Mark iii. 30.

be observed that from the absence of the article in the original, it cannot with certainty be understood of the Holy Spirit as *personally* referred to, but that it would with more probability be rendered, “If I cast out demons *by divine co-operation* ;” a translation which is rendered still more probable by the parallel expression of St. Luke, “If I *by the finger of God* cast out demons^a.” And certainly when our Lord speaks of his miracles, he seems to ascribe them to the Father, rather than to the Holy Spirit. “*My Father which dwelleth in me, he doeth the works*^b.”

But the question still recurs, whether it does not follow, from considering the *occasion* on which these words were spoken, that our Lord meant to imply that the Pharisees *had incurred* this extremity of guilt. I must confess, though I do it with diffidence, that I conceive that he is not so to be understood. This was *the very first* cavil which had been advanced against the *evidences* of his mission ; and it was probably on the second occasion on which it was brought forward, that our Lord entered upon these statements respecting it. But it should be remembered that the words will equally bear to be understood, as if spoken

^a Εἰ δὲ ἐγὼ ἐν πνεύματι Θεοῦ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια,—Matt. xii. 28.—Εἰ δὲ ἐν δακτύλῳ Θεοῦ, κ. τ. λ.

^b John xiv. 10.

only by way of *caution*. Such a caution was needful; because, in consequence of the same disposition which induced them then to circulate such an insinuation, they would be likely both to remain in the same obduracy with regard to the evidence afforded during his personal ministry, and also to reject the future and still greater demonstration of his resurrection, and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. We know that in several forms, and on many occasions, he spoke of the evidence of his mission as not yet actually completed. He specified the time which followed “the lifting up of the Son of man,” as being that in which they “should know that he was the Messiah;” and he told them that *then*, “if they believed not, they would die in their sins.” Hence, although their cavil was not directed *personally* against the Son of man, so much as against the evidences of his authority, yet it seems probable that it did not amount to the “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.”

2. Again, our Lord evidently spoke of the blasphemy as directed *personally* against the Holy Ghost^c. Yet the personal operations, and, as it were, the distinct dispensation of the Holy Ghost,

^c Ἡ δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος βλασφημία—Matt. xii. 31. ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου.—ver. 32. τῷ δὲ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα βλασφημήσαντι.—Luke xii. 10.

by his divers *gifts* and *influences* did not commence until after the ascension of our Lord^a. We must therefore understand our Lord as speaking *by anticipation* of that future dispensation, and of the increased responsibility which it would bring, and of the heinous guilt which they would incur, if, when more abundant proof was offered, their malignant and calumniating propensities should continue to gather strength, and confirm them in infidelity, instead of yielding to the force of that evidence which demanded their assent. The evidences of the Gospel would then be more numerous, more perceptible, and complete. To those which had already been exhibited, would be added many *others*. Of *all these* “the disciples would bear witness;” and “not they only, but also the Holy Spirit, which God would give to them that should obey Jesus.” For as “the Advocate of Jesus,” and as “the Spirit of truth,” he would “testify of Jesus,” and “reprove the world of sin, because they believed not in *him*.”—The principal and original causes of disbelief, both at the time at which our Lord spoke, and afterwards, were virtually the same. But some of those, who remained

^a The Holy Spirit was not yet (given), because Jesus was not yet glorified. John vii. 39. The word *given* is supplementary, and somewhat obscures the sense of the passage. Οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ὅτι, κ. τ. λ.—Compare Acts xix. 2.

under the unhappy influence of such delusive views during the time of Christ's humiliation, *might* see reason to abandon them, when after Christ's entrance on his glory, the Holy Spirit was poured out. And probably many of them actually *did* repent, and were converted, and believed, and joined the company of primitive believers; even though, perhaps, a still greater number still "mocked, and contradicted, and blasphemed^b."

These considerations seem to render it most probable, that the declaration of our Lord respecting "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" was not immediately, much less exclusively, applicable to those whom he then addressed. It seems rather to have been intended as *a timely caution* to those, who had already begun, not only to resist, but to cavil at the evidence which was furnished; intimating to them the danger in which they would be involved at a future period, if they persevered in their malignity.

The words of our text afford a very strong confirmation of this opinion. The same declaration respecting this unpardonable blasphemy is there found in a connexion wholly different. I have adopted this passage as my text in order to give the greater prominence to it; because

^b Acts ii. 13; xiii. 45.

I am not aware that it is generally attended to in inquiries upon this subject. The context seems distinctly to shew, that this important statement of our Lord had a *prospective* reference to the time when the Gospel was published by the Apostles, that is, after the evidences, as well as the great transactions of the Gospel, had been completed, and that salvation, “which first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed to mankind by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” The last of these divine attestations, which was a distinct and most convincing species of evidence, our Saviour specially notices in the words *which follow our text*. The discourse in which they occur was certainly delivered subsequently to the occasion, which at first called forth this denunciation of our Lord. But it was delivered, though in the presence of the multitude, only to his disciples; and with reference to their *future* ministrations and sufferings, in promulgating the Gospel. For he first exhorted his disciples to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy,” having directed them “to proclaim upon the house-tops even all that he had spoken to them in private,” he states that they ought not to “fear man, but God, who could both kill and cast into hell;” and he also assures

them of the protection of God's providence. He then adds ; " Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God ; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him ; but *unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.* And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say ; for *the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*" — To the Apostles were given " a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay nor resist^a." To " one also was given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit ; to another faith by the same Spirit ; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit ; to another the working of miracles ; to another prophecy ; to another discerning of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; to another the interpretation of tongues^b." In that day the Gospel came unto mankind, " not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance^c."

^a Luke xxi. 15.^b 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.^c 1 Thess. i. 5.

Its designs were accomplished, its offers universal, and its evidence complete; and it was accompanied with "*demonstration of the Spirit*, and of power^a." The offence of the cross had not ceased; but it was no longer that which perplexed the understanding, but which was contrary to the prejudices of mankind, and to the pride and depravity of their hearts. To all that heard it, it brought either the means of salvation, or the increase of condemnation.

Yet final negligence, and final impenitence, though undoubtedly they also *end* in condemnation, are not *the same thing* with "the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit;" the grand characteristic of which is, that *it shuts out from the hope of forgiveness*. And if *that* be the consequence of this guilt, and of this guilt *only*, as our Lord expressly declares, we shall find several other descriptions of it in the writings of the Apostles, though it is there considered in a somewhat different point of view. And perhaps we may state, that nothing amounts to this most awful, and only irremissible sin, but a wilful, malignant, open, and determined *opposition* to those truths, of which we have *perceived the evidence*, and of the divine origin of which we have in our consciences been *convinced*. Yet it should seem that such was the conduct, in the

^a 1 Cor. ii. 5.

Apostolic times, not only of many of those who never embraced the Gospel, but even of some who had received and understood it, and yet apostatized from it; who, by their wilful, deliberate, and malignant renunciation and opposition, committed that “sin which is unto death,” and of which St. John declared that “he did not say that they should pray for it;” for, in fact, it involved the impossibility of *repentance*, as well as of *pardon*^b. “For,” says St. Paul to the Hebrews, “it is *impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of *the Holy Ghost*, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, *to renew them again to repentance*; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame^c.” And again; “If we sin *wilfully*, after that we have *received the knowledge of the truth*, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” And he more fully describes the transgression of this voluntary offender, by stating, that he is one “who hath *trodden under foot the Son of God*, and hath *counted the blood of the covenant*, wherewith he was sanctified, *an unholy thing*, and hath *done despite unto the Spirit of grace*^d.”

^b 1 John v. 16, 17.

^c Heb. vi. 4—6.

^d Heb. x. 26—39. Ἐκουσίως γὰρ ἁμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν, κ. τ. λ.

3. It is evident from these descriptions, that no one, who retains the *profession* of Christianity, can be supposed to be included in any of *these* denunciations. Indeed they are not applicable to any but those, who, from *malignity* of heart, *reject* or *apostatize from* the Gospel, and who endanger the comfort and stability of *others* by an open, active, acrimonious cavilling against its evidences and doctrines. And as wilful apostacy and opposition, arising from depravity of *heart*, alone produces the full measure of guilt, none but they who have the gift of "*discerning of spirits*," can be authorized to ascribe this guilt to any of their fellow-sinners. We cannot now incur it by opposition to *sensible* and *present* miracles. Yet what the evidence of the Gospel now wants in that respect, is perhaps abundantly counterbalanced by many circumstances, which, since the Apostolic times, have augmented, and strengthened, and made still more satisfactory, the arguments in behalf of the Gospel. We therefore cannot deny the *possibility* of the crime, even in our own circumstances; but we must rather dread its approaches in *ourselves*, than venture to impute it to *others*. And as it is a crime which is brought into full operation by actually leading, not only to suppressed infidelity, but to open revilings directed against the Gospel, we shall, at least, do well in suffering the caution,

which our Lord *subjoined to this denunciation*, to work its full effect upon that “unruly member the *tongue*,” and upon that corrupt fountain the *heart*, “out of the abundance of which the tongue speaks.” “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

II. I observed that a second cavil was also advanced against the sufficiency of the proofs, by which the mission of Jesus was supported, in the demand of a particular species of evidence which the Jews chose to require. One of the occasions upon which it was advanced, was after our Lord had refuted the former one. “Then certain of the Scribes and Pharisees, answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.” This demand was however made on *several* occasions; and it is more fully expressed by St. Mark, when

he mentions the repetition of it after the feeding of the four thousand. "The Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him *a sign from heaven*, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his Spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? There shall no sign be given to this generation^a." No sign, such as they required, would be exhibited to them. For alas! they knew as little *what* they asked, as do those who, in playful but thoughtless depravity, invoke 'damnation on their souls.' They referred to the sign of "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven," of which Daniel had spoken. But, as our Saviour observed with reference to the same prophecy, "*When the Son of man shall come in his glory*, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered *all nations*, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.—And these shall go away into *everlasting punishment*, but the righteous into *life eternal*^b." There was a time, however, when Jesus, avowing his Messiahship to the high priest, said with awful significancy,

^a Mark viii. 11, 12.

^b Matt. xxv. 31—46. Compare this with Dan. vii. 9—14.

“ Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven^c.” Yet, even after that declaration, they continued the same “ blasphemy against the Son of man,” the same neglect, and even contempt of the various evidences which he had exhibited of his authority, and again specified that particular evidence, which alone would induce them to abandon their unbelief. “ He saved others, himself he cannot save. Let Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe^d.” Again, they knew not what they asked. Jesus came to destroy every enemy of man’s salvation, by “ triumphing over them on his cross.” To have complied with their demand, would have been to have left undone the work which he was then about to finish. Jesus made not any answer to them from the cross ; for he knew that the glory, which would follow his sufferings, would be made known by his resurrection from the dead, and that the gifts, which he would receive for men, would soon be poured down from on high. But on the former occasions, though unwittingly they had made a demand with which it was impossible to comply, he answered them

^c Matt. xxvi. 64.

^d Mark xv. 29—32. It is worthy of notice that this allows the *miracles* of Jesus, and that he had advanced a claim to be the *Messiah*.

according to their intention. For they meant to require another evidence, in addition to all that had previously been afforded. And although no such sign, as that to which they had alluded, would be given to that generation, another would be given, which he described under the phrase "the sign of the Prophet Jonas." "For," added our Lord in explanation, "as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth^a."

In what manner that prediction was fulfilled, it is unnecessary to repeat. But let it be observed that, in *two* different respects, the spirit of infidelity ignorantly and erroneously objected to the sufficiency of the proofs that Jesus was what he claimed to be.—They hastily complained of the supposed deficiency, when a little patience would have furnished them with decisive evidence. It was not indeed of the precise kind which they demanded; but the question which they ought to have considered was, whether it was not sufficient.—And again, they insisted on the want of such exhibitions of the power of Jesus as could not have been given consistently either with the intentions of God, or the good of mankind. Yet infidelity still continues to make similar objections and

^a Matt. xii. 39, &c.

demands. We must, however, take the evidence as we find it. It is such as God has seen fit to furnish, and it is sufficient to prove that "he has spoken by his Son." It is obvious even to our own limited discernment, that many of the demands of the infidel are unreasonable; they would probably appear still more so, if we were more fully acquainted with the scheme of the divine counsels. There are evidences of the truth of the Gospel *still* in reserve. And since we can even now give a sufficient reason of the hope that is in us, why should we be dissatisfied that the Gospel is yet incompletely promulgated, and that *all* the prophecies are not completed? These are proofs reserved for the conviction of those of *the latter days*; and one day we shall *all* see "the sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven."

Our Lord took occasion from the allusion to Jonah the Prophet, to shew, by a beautiful and impressive contrast, the criminality of those who rejected his words. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon;

and behold a greater than Solomon is here.” Has he not been proved to be all that he claimed to be, by demonstration at once varied and convincing? And “he that believeth on Jesus, believeth on him that sent him.” And that heavenly Messenger himself has declared, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day^a.” Nay, he has even told us, and it ought to be seriously considered by all that have heard of his name, that “he that believeth not in him is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God,” who has been “lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life^b.” “If he had not come and spoken to us, and done the works which no other man did, we had not had sin; but now have we no cloke for our sin^c.” And though we have not seen him in the flesh, and have not heard him ourselves, we must not conceive that hereby we can be excused. For he declared to those, who were to record his instructions, and to disperse them through the world; “He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent

^a John xii. 44, &c.

^b John iii. 16—18.

^c John xv. 22—24.

me^d.” For Jesus was “that stone, which was laid in Zion for a foundation ;” and “*whosoever*,” said he again, “shall fall upon that stone shall be broken, but on *whomsoever* it shall fall, it will grind him to powder^e.”

We must then believe, and obey. We must “endure unto the end ;” for it is even “better, as the Apostle tells us, never to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered unto us.” And not an Apostle only, but Jesus himself has given us the same admonition, in the concluding portion of that discourse, which was occasioned by the two cavils which we have noticed in this Lecture. He borrows from the case of the demoniacs, by his undoubted miracles upon whom they had not been convinced, a striking illustration of the fatal *progress* of infidelity. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house, from whence I came out ; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there ; and the last

^d Luke x. 16.

^e Isai. xxviii. 16. Matt. xxi. 42—44.

state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation^a."

It concerns us, who, though Gentiles, have become "fellow-heirs, and of the same body, with the chosen people of God, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel," to take heed lest we also "frustrate the grace of God,"—lest we "draw back unto perdition,—lest we do not believe to the saving of the soul." For shall anything, but our unbelief, "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Remember, then, that the Gospel gives us the offer of pardon, and the promise of sanctification. It is "the new covenant established upon better promises. It comes to us with sanctions of promise and of threatening. It comes recommended and enforced by numerous evidences, which appeal both to the understanding and to the heart, and which have brought conviction to the minds both of *the learned*, and of *the unlearned*."

Do you delight to peruse the histories of past ages? Are you interested and edified by tracing events up to their causes, and by pursuing

^a 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. Matt. xii. 43—45.—These two passages illustrate each other. And we might, from this parabolic description given by our Lord of the *progress* of the infidelity of the Jews, deduce an additional argument in support of the opinion defended in the former part of this Lecture, that our Lord spoke of the unpardonable blasphemy by way of *anticipation*.

the order in which they produced their consequences?—Consider then the existence, the operation, and the effects of Christianity. As inquisitive men, as Scholars, as Philosophers, as Christians, examine this remarkable era in the history of the human intellect,—this event which was prepared by all preceding ones,—which has since so materially influenced the opinions and the civilization of the world,—which predicts the future universality of its own propagation. Come to some decision respecting these things, which are important with regard to the faith and guidance of your fellow-men, and still more so as they concern yourselves.—While you investigate the laws and phenomena of the material world, forget not that there is a spiritual world, hereafter to be revealed, and that we are the destined heirs of an immortality, which will be happy, or miserable, according to our characters here. And remember, that for the knowledge which is requisite in this matter, you can go to none but to Christ Jesus; for “he alone hath the words of eternal life.”

Remember, that while many are doubting, and investigating, and deriving from human learning almost as much hindrance as assistance, many a poor and unlettered peasant in our own land, many an uncivilized heathen in foreign lands, is laying hold on eternal life; and finds in the purifying and consolatory tendency of the Gospel

the most satisfactory evidence both of its truth and utility. For he finds it a provision for all the wants which he previously felt. And if it discovers to him more extensive views of his own guilt and danger, and of the perfections and requirements of God, it does but discover that, of which he allows the justice and the propriety. And in proportion as he is thereby more humbled before his God, he also derives more abundant consolation from his word, and exercises a more confirmed confidence in his promises. And thus, being made perfect in love, and growing in grace and holiness, he waits for the hope of righteousness by faith.

The same meetness for heaven is attainable by all, and is *necessary for all*. But we must “give earnest heed to the things which we hear,” if we are to “live and grow thereby.” The same arguments which have convinced so many of the truth and of the importance of our religion, are still *sufficient* to satisfy us. And we must be content to receive the Gospel as it is offered to us, neither dissatisfied because of the absence of any evidence which we may suppose ought to have been furnished, nor objecting to the doctrines which are revealed by it. Our Lord referred the Jews to the witness of their own Scriptures; but he declared that “if they heard not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded

though one rose from the dead^a." He declared that, while some cavilled at the character in which the Baptist appeared, and others at his own, "wisdom would be justified of all her children^b." And assuredly, though "the Jews required a *sign*, and the Greeks sought after *wisdom*," we can shew that each of those demands was unreasonable, if they were made in any view which disposed them to a rejection of the Gospel. For it is most abundantly demonstrable, that "Christ crucified is both the *power* of God, and the *wisdom* of God^c."

But if we allow the evidence, and value, and necessity of the Gospel, let us not remain in ignorance of what is thereby revealed. We not unfrequently meet with some, even in a Christian country, who have had such opportunities, and have arrived at such an age, that, "for the time, they ought to be *teachers*; yet who have need to be *taught* again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God^d." That ignorance is sometimes openly *avowed*; and those who make the avowal sometimes even appear to be *proud* of it. Yet a young Athenian would have been ashamed to be thought so ignorant with respect to the philosophical systems of his age and city. Nay,

^a Luke xvi. 31.

^b Matt. xi. 19.

^c 1 Cor. i. 24.


^d Heb. v. 12.

would not many among ourselves be ashamed to be thought ignorant of the laws, and literature, and science of our own country, who are yet negligent of the doctrine, and precepts of Jesus? Yet there is a more important knowledge than any that relates to terrestrial objects; there is a teacher more divine, and of more authority than any that we can “call Master upon earth^a.” He calls upon us to hear, and to believe in him; to repent, and follow him. He declares to us the authority with which he is invested, and the responsibility which rests upon ourselves.—“*All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and preach the Gospel to every creature.—He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.*”

We have to conjure you, therefore, by the dignity of him, whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world,—by the miracles which he wrought,—by the prophecies which he fulfilled,—by the greatness of the salvation which he purchased,—by the promises, and by the terrors of the Lord,—by the shortness of life, and the approaches of death,—by the realities of eternity, and the inestimable value of your immortal souls—that you “turn not away from him that speaketh from heaven.”—If we have at all increased your ad-

^a Matt. xxiii. 10.

miration of the beauty and comprehensiveness of the word of God, from whence we have drawn, and ever shall draw, our arguments and representations,—if we have disposed you to peruse it more frequently and attentively,—if we have been able to strengthen your conviction of its truth, to impress you with a sense of its importance, and to persuade you to a compliance with its dictates—our labours will not have been in vain. And if those, who are able, will defend the Gospel against its adversaries, and turn to righteousness those that profess it,—and if all ‘that profess and call themselves Christians,’ will adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour by a sober, righteous, and godly life, “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,”—then will our heavenly Father be glorified. Our Saviour will then “see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;”—and we shall one day be “with him, and behold his glory.”



ERRATA.

- P. 79. l. 9. for *the text* read *this passage*.
80. l. 7. for *tcxt* read *test*.
99. l. 17. for *was* read *were*.
292. l. 3. for *him* read *that he*.
— l. 21. for *untraced* read *embraced*.
372. l. 5. for *to* read *on*.

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